Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party
November 1972 20 pence

Editorial Comments

ANGELA DAVIS
THE NATURE OF FREEDOM

ANDREW ROTHSTEIN
THE USSR, ITS CLASSES AND MR. BONAVIA

LOUIS ALTHUSSER
REPLY TO JOHN LEWIS (SELF CRITICISM)
PART II

Discussion
TONY CHATER
Strategy of Socialist Revolution in Britain

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MARXISM TODAY

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Volume 16, Number 11

Editor James Klugmann

Editorial Board Gabriel Carritt/Tony Chater/Jack Cohen/Maurice Cornforth/Maurice Dobb/John Foster/John Gollan/Arnold Kettle/John Mahon/Alan Morton/Bert Pearce/Michael Seifert/George Wake/Nick Wright

Editorial Correspondence James Klugmann, 16 King Street, WC2E 8HY

Advertisements Doris Allison, above address

Orders and Subscriptions Usual agents or Central Books Ltd., 37 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8PS

Subscription rates £2.85 per annum

CONTENTS

	Editorial Comments	321
Angela Davis	**The Nature of Freedom**	324
Andrew Rothstein	**The USSR, Its Classes and Mr. Bonavia**	330
Louis Althusser	**Reply to John Lewis (Self Criticism) Part II**	343
Discussion:		
Tony Chater	**Strategy of Socialist Revolution in Britain**	349

SOME ARTICLES PLANNED FOR DECEMBER AND JANUARY (1973) ISSUES

Rosemary Small	**Marx, Engels and the Family**
John Cox and Richard Hayter	**Crisis of Man and Environment: A Reply**
Martin Milligan	**The Comparative Value of Men and Machines**
Dick Geary	**Some Aspects of the Marxism of Karl Kautsky**
Steven Sedley and Tony Agathangelou	**Pornography and the Law**
G. A. Cohen	**Thoughts on the *Grundrisse***
Ron Bellamy	**New Trends of the British Economy**
Ruth and Edmund Frow	**London Millwrights and the Combination Acts**
Ted Seyd	**Eysenck, Race, Intelligence and Education**

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editorial Comments

SOME time ago preliminary announcements were made about the preparation, jointly by Lawrence and Wishart (London), International Publishers (New York) and Progress Publishers and the Institute of Marxism-Leninism (Moscow), of a definitive English edition of *The Works of Marx and Engels,* in 50 volumes.

The first three volumes are already edited and practically ready for printing. These are volumes of immense interest, containing the early essays, letters and articles, and also poems, by Marx and Engels up to the time when their collaboration began in 1844.

Of very great interest in the first volume is Marx's doctoral thesis *Comparison of the Philosophies of Democritus and Epicurus* which he wrote for the University of Berlin, and his *Seven Notebooks on the Philosophy of Epicurus* which contain his accompanying postgraduate notes. Marx's general standpoint was here markedly Hegelian and idealist. The thesis deservedly won him the title of "Dr. Marx", for it is a work of profound originality which, for all its idealist bias, throws great light on the beginnings of philosophical materialism in ancient Greece.

Following this are political articles written by the young Marx in opposition to the reactionary regime in Prussia. In these we see him starting on the path which led him through practical protest and struggle against social injustices to Communism.

The second volume contains early writings by Engels. Some are illustrated by humorous drawings; and there are a good many poems, including *The Triumph of Faith* which in a Byronic style celebrates the battles between the Young Hegelians (among them the doughty Dr. Marx) and the orthodox theologians. Besides many works of social and literary criticism there is a pamphlet against a course of lectures delivered in Berlin by the very reactionary and obscurantist philosopher Schelling. Here Engels writes as an avowed Hegelian, protesting against Schelling's attacks on the Master.

The third volume, besides a revised translation of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, contains his polemic against *Hegel's Philosophy of the State*, as well as much other material by Marx and Engels written in this crucial year of the evolution of their Communist standpoint.

The perusal of these three volumes will prove very interesting indeed to those who are concerned with contemporary polemics about how and when Marx and Engels became Marxists. An acquaintance with what they did and wrote as young men is a useful (indeed, necessary) qualification for independence of judgment in controversies about the formation of their philosophical and political standpoint.

The contents of the ensuing volumes have now all been translated up to Volume 8, and the translation has been completed of the *Grundrisse*, which will occupy Volumes 28 and 29. The final work of editing these ensuing volumes is now in progress.

The *Works* will be printed in Moscow—in a modern English typeface specially purchased. It is impossible at this moment to announce the precise date for the publication of the first three volumes, but it is hoped they will be on sale before the end of 1973. They will be very fully annotated.

The work of editing and annotation is being done in collaboration by editors in Moscow, London and New York. The text to be published of the *Grundrisse* will embody the latest textual work by the Moscow and Berlin Institutes of Marxism-Leninism on the original handwritten manuscripts, and therefore will be more authentic than any previously published text. Previous versions contained many errors of transcription, some of which obscure the meaning. The whole edition is being prepared under the joint supervision of the Communist Parties of the Soviet Union, the United States of America, and Great Britain.

THE NEW MEGA

While noting the above, readers may be interested to learn of a further exciting new development in the publication of the works of Marx and Engels. This is a project undertaken jointly by the Institutes of Marxism-Leninism attached to the CPSU and the Socialist Unity Party of Germany respectively, to issue a new, expanded, approxi-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mately 100-volume edition of the Marx-Engels *Gesamtausgabe* (the complete edition of the works of Marx and Engels, always known as MEGA).

A number of Marxist scholars in several countries and the well-known International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam are also to co-operate in various ways.

The original MEGA which began to appear in 1927 and which was published by the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, was wound up in 1935 after the publication of only 12 volumes. Between 1955 and 1966, the CPSU published 53 volumes of the Marx-Engels *Works*, the most comprehensive publishing undertaking of the works of Marx and Engels until that time.

What will be new about the projected 100-volume edition (a sample volume of which has just been received) is that it will really be a "complete" edition in every sense of the word. All the new articles, letters, and writings discovered by Marxist researchers since 1966 will be incorporated and this new material alone will fill more than a dozen volumes.

The main principles to be followed are the illustration of the evolution and development of the ideas of Marx and Engels and, after 1844, to present their joint contributions to specific aspects of Marxist theory side by side. Everything therefore will be in strict, chronological order and the date of *writing* not the date of *publication* is being regarded as of decisive importance. Different drafts, even separate printed editions of the same work in which changes and improvements have been made, will all be reproduced. (The different drafts and versions of "Capital" will fill 20 volumes).

As the editors write: ". . . all manuscripts, drafts, outlines, quotations from, and marginal comments in, other books, will be included. In addition, apart from letters exchanged between Marx and Engels, letters from third persons to them and letters between third persons discussing important matters relating to Marxist scholarship. . . ."

"All texts will be reproduced in the original language in which they were written."

The entire project will be arranged in four main separate sections. First, separate works, articles, drafts, with the exception of "Capital". Second "Capital". Third, letters. Fourth, Extracts, Outlines, Notes.

The publishers will be *Dietz Verlag*, Berlin, who have a well deserved reputation for fine printing, fully confirmed by the handsome appearance and binding, the fine, readable, type of the sample volume.

MARXISM AND THE THEORY OF PERSONALITY

Editions Sociales, Paris, have recently published the second edition of Lucien Sève's important book *Marxisme et Théorie de la Personalité.* This work marks an important stage in the development of Marxism in France. Its influence has now extended far beyond France and it has been published in many countries (including the GDR and the Federal German Republic) and languages.

The first edition appeared in 1969 and was situated in the polemical context of the theories developed by Roger Garaudy and Louis Althusser. Sève is critical of both of these theories but in by no means equal manner. Garaudy's theories, in particular those relating to the problem of humanism, are condemned as speculative and therefore as being in total opposition to historical materialism. Sève considers, on the other hand, Althusser's criticism of speculative humanism to be important but does not accept Althusser's own solution to the problem: theoretical anti-humanism.

Sève says that both Garaudy and Althusser have failed to see the revolutionary import of Marx's solution to the problem of the human essence contained in his Sixth *Thesis on Feuerbach.*

> "Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of social relations."

The book can be considered as a thorough analysis of the revolutionary implications of the 6th Thesis. It is interesting that where Marx says "human essence" Garaudy says "man" or "individual" and makes the "thesis" his own, while Althusser says "non-abstract man" and rejects the thesis as being nonsense if taken "literally". What neither see, according to Sève, is that Marx's point is precisely that the human essence does not have a "human form", it cannot be located in the individual but rather must be sought at the level of social relations. It is only when the logic of the social relations has been fully analysed by means of Marxist economics that one has the means to form concepts adequate to the social nature of the individual.

Thus Sève argues that the scientific concept of "needs" must be articulated with the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

specific qualities of social relations that make expanded reproduction possible since this sort of reproduction is characteristic of human needs as opposed to the simple reproduction of purely biological needs.

Sève's main point, the excentricity of the human essence, demands the resolution of a number of philosophical problems such as that of the relation between the general and the particular and between essence and existence which he shows can only be done within the framework of dialectical materialism.

The book contains in addition valuable discussions on Marx's 1844 manuscripts, the relation of Marx to Hegel (especially the problem of the "inversion" of Hegel's idealism) and on various aspects of *Capital*. The book is closely argued and it is worth noting that in the three years since the first edition there has been no attempt to answer his criticisms of theoretical anti-humanism.

Many of Sève's ideas have already become a part of the analysis of state monopoly capitalism being made by the economists working with *Economie et Politique* (the monthly economic review of the French Communist Party) which has laid the main theoretical basis for the development of the Party's programme.

It is much to be hoped that the book will eventually be published in English.

COMMUNIST ELECTED IN COLOMBIA

For the first time in the history of the Latin American state of Colombia a Communist has been elected to an executive position on the city council of the capital, Bogota; and the councilman elected, as second vice-president of the city council, is the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Colombia, Gilberto Viera.

The election of Viera was made possible by an alliance between the progressive wing of the Liberal Party (one of the two ruling parties), and the National Popular Alliance (Anapo). Anapo, it should be recalled, lost the countrywide presidential elections in 1970 by only 60,000 votes.

The significance of Viera's election is not only that a leading Communist was elected to such a key post in the capital, but also that his victory, based on such a wide alliance, shattered the previous agreement signed between the ruling Conservative and Liberal Parties. This agreement, signed in 1957, stipulated that they would each alternate as the government until 1973. Other parties were permitted to participate in elections, but only at council and state level.

The emergence in 1970 of Anapo as a "third party" (in fact, an alliance, which includes the Communist Party), signified the collapse of the "parity system".

With the progressive wing of the Liberal Party and some individual Conservatives rejecting the 1957 parity agreement, a new perspective is opening up for the 1974 elections.

The Colombian Communist Party, which for many years has led the guerrilla movement in Colombia and which still retains its armed units, has won leading positions in a number of Colombian city councils. The Party has issued an appeal for a united front for the 1974 elections.

UNIVERSITY STAFFS

The Communist Party's National University Staffs Advisory Committee was formed in June 1971 for the purpose of promoting political activity by communist academics in fields related to their occupation, namely, ideology, university development and professional organisation.

The Committee does not seek to direct local activities but rather to stimulate them by facilitating exchanges of information and ideas. Its principal methods of work are to circulate a termly Bulletin and to organise bi-annual conferences on important subjects of concern to academics. It also seeks to liaise, on behalf of the university staffs, with the National Student Committee and the advisory committees representing the other sectors of education.

It has already held two conferences—on "The Content of University Education" and on "Trade Unionism and Political Consciousness in the Universities". Its third conference is to take place on Saturday, December 2 at Marx House, from 10.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. The subject will be "University Government, Academic Freedom and the structure of the Profession". Speakers will include Pat Devine (Manchester), Michael Butler (Liverpool) and a representative of the National Student Committee. Brian Simon will be in the chair. Admission will be by Party card (registration fee: 30p) fare pool.*

* The work of the Committee is financed entirely by voluntary subscriptions. Subscriptions and all other communications should be sent to:— Steve Ruhemann, Secretary, 18 Granvelle Terrace, Bingley. Yorkshire. BD16 4HW. Subscriptions to the Bulletin (40p per annum for the first copy and 30p for each additional copy) should be sent to the same address.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Nature of Freedom

Angela Davis *

The idea of freedom has justifiably been a dominating theme in the history of Western ideas. Man has been repeatedly defined in terms of his inalienable freedom. One of the most acute paradoxes present in the history of Western society is that while on a philosophical plane freedom has been delineated in the most lofty and sublime fashion, concrete reality has always been permeated with the most brutal forms of unfreedom, of enslavement. In ancient Greece where, so we are taught, democracy had its source, it cannot be overlooked that in spite of all the philosophical assertions of man's freedom, in spite of the demand that man realise himself through exercising his freedom as a citizen of the polis, the majority of the people in Athens were not free. Women were not citizens and slavery was an accepted institution. Moreover, there was definitely a form of racism present in Greek society, for only Greeks were suited for the benefits of freedom: all non-Greeks were called barbarians and by their very nature could not be deserving or even capable of freedom.

In this context, one cannot fail to conjure up the image of Thomas Jefferson and the other so-called Fathers formulating the noble concepts of the Constitution of the United States while their slaves were living in misery. In order not to mar the beauty of the Constitution and at the same time to protect the institution of slavery, they wrote about "persons held to service or labour", a euphemism for the word slavery, as being exceptional types of human beings, persons who do not merit the guarantees and rights of the Constitution.

Is man free or is he not? Ought he be free or ought he not be free? The history of Black Literature provides, in my opinion, a much more illuminating account of the nature of freedom, its extent and limits, than all the philosophical discourses on this theme in the history of Western society. Why? For a number of reasons. First of all, because Black Literature in this country and throughout the world projects the consciousness of a people who have been denied entrance into the real world of freedom. Black people have exposed, by their very existence, the inadequacies not only of the practice of freedom, but of its very theoretical formulation. Because, if the theory of freedom remains isolated from the practice of freedom or rather is contradicted in reality, then this means that something must be wrong with the concept—that is, if we are thinking in a dialectical manner.

The Pivotal Theme

The pivotal theme of this course will thus be the idea of freedom as it is unfolded in the literary undertaking of Black people. Starting with *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* we will explore the slave's experience of his bondage and thus the negative experience of freedom. Most important here will be the crucial transformation of the concept of freedom as a static, given principle into the concept of liberation, the dynamic, active struggle for freedom. We will move on to W. E. B. Du Bois, to Jean Toomer, Richard Wright and John A. Williams. Interspersed will be poetry from the various periods of Black history in this country, and theoretical analyses such as Fanon and Du Bois' *A.B.C. of Color*. Finally I would like to discuss a few pieces by African writers and poems by Nicolas Guillen, a Black Cuban poet, and compare them to the work of American Blacks.

Throughout the course, I have said, the notion of freedom will be the axis around which we will attempt to develop other philosophical concepts. We will encounter such metaphysical notions as identity, the problem of self-knowledge. The kind of philosophy of history which emerges out of the works we are studying will be crucial. The morality peculiar to an oppressed people is something we will have to come to grips with. As we progress along the path of the unfolding of freedom in Black literature, we should retrieve a whole host of related themes.

Before I get into the material, I would like to say a few words about the kinds of questions we ought to ask ourselves when we delve into the nature of human freedom. First of all, is freedom totally subjective, totally objective, or is it a synthesis of both poles? Let me try to explain what I mean. Is freedom to be conceived merely as an inherent, given characteristic of man, is it a freedom which is confined within the human mind, is freedom an internal experience? Or, on the other hand, is freedom only the liberty to move, to act in a way one chooses? Let us pose the original question as to the subjectivity or objectivity of freedom in the following

* We express our thanks to the publishers of *American Dialog* for permission to reprint this article which appeared in the Autumn 1971 number. It was Angela Davis' opening lecture in her course at University College, Los Angeles on "Recurring Philosophical Themes in Black Literature": We have inserted subheadings. *Ed.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

manner: Is freedom the freedom of thought or the freedom of action? Or more important, is it possible to conceive of the one without the other?

This leads us directly to the problem of whether freedom is at all possible within the bounds of material bondage. Can the slave be said to be free in any way? This brings to mind one of the more notorious statements which the French Existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, has made. Even the man in chains, he says, remains free—and for this reason: he is always at liberty to eliminate his condition of slavery even if this means his death. That is, his freedom is narrowly defined as the freedom to choose between his state of captivity and his death. Now, this is extreme. But we have to decide whether or not this is the way in which we are going to define that concept. Certainly, this would not be compatible with the notion of liberation, for when the slave opts for death, he does much more than obliterate his condition of enslavement, for at the same time he is abolishing the very condition of freedom, life. Yet there is more to be said, when we take the decision to die out of an abstract context and examine the dynamics of a real situation in which a slave meets his death in the fight for concrete freedom. That is to say, the choice, slavery or death, could either mean slavery or suicide, or on the other hand slavery or liberation at all costs. The difference between the two situations is crucial.

The authentic consciousness of an oppressed people entails an understanding of the necessity to abolish oppression. The slave finds at the end of his journey towards understanding a real grasp of what freedom means. He knows that it means the destruction of the master-slave relationship. And in this sense, his knowledge of freedom is more profound than that of the master. For the master feels himself free and he feels himself free because he is able to control the lives of others. He is free at the expense of the freedom of another. The slave experiences the freedom of the master in its true light. He understands that the master's freedom is abstract freedom to suppress other human beings. The slave understands that this is a pseudo concept of freedom and at this point is more enlightened than his master for he realises that the master is a slave of his own misconceptions, his own misdeeds, his own brutality, his own effort to oppress.

Voyages to Freedom

Now I would like to go into the material. The first part of *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, called "Life of a Slave", constitutes a physical voyage from slavery to freedom which is both the conclusion and reflection of a philosophical voyage from slavery to freedom. We will see that neither voyage would have been possible alone; they are mutually determinant.

The point of departure for this voyage is the following question Frederick Douglass asks himself as a child: "Why am I a slave? Why are some people slaves and others masters?" (page 50). His critical attitude when he fails to accept the usual answer—that God had made Black people to be slaves and white people to be masters—is the basic condition which must be present before freedom can become a possibility in the mind of the slave. We must not forget that throughout the history of Western society there is an abundance of justifications for the existence of slavery. Both Plato and Aristotle felt that some men were born to be slaves, some men are not born into a state of freedom. Religious justifications for slavery are to be found at every turn.

Let's attempt to arrive at a philosophical definition of the slave: we have already stated the essence: he is a human being who, by some reason or another is denied freedom. But is not the essence of the human being his freedom? Either the slave is not a man or his very existence is a contradiction. We can rule out the first alternative, although we should not forget that the prevailing ideology defined the Black man as sub-human. The failure to deal with the contradictory nature of slavery, the imposed ignorance of reality is exemplified in the notion that the slave is not a man, for if he were a man, he should certainly be free.

We all know of the calculated attempts to rob the Black man of his humanity. We know that, in order to maintain the institution of slavery, Black people were forced to live in conditions not fit for animals. The white slave-owners were determined to mould Black people into the image of the sub-human being which they had contrived in order to justify their actions. A vicious circle emerges in which the slave-owner loses all consciousness of himself.

The vicious circle continues to turn, but for the slave, there is a way out: Resistance. Frederick Douglass seems to have had his first experience of this possibility of a slave becoming free upon observing a slave resist a flogging: "That slave who had the courage to stand up for himself against the overseer, although he might have many hard stripes at first, became while legally a slave virtually a free man. 'You can shoot me', said a slave to Rigby Hopkins, 'but you can't whip me', and the result was he was neither whipped nor shot".

Already we can begin to concretise the notion of freedom as it appeared to the slave. The first condition of freedom is the open act of resistance—physical resistance, violent resistance. In that act of resistance, the rudiments of freedom are already present. And the violent retaliation signifies much more than the physical act: it is refusal not only to submit to the flogging, but refusal to accept the definitions of the slave-master; it is implicitly a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rejection of the institution of slavery, its standards, its morality, a microcosmic effort towards liberation.

The slave is actually conscious of the fact that freedom is not a fact, it is not given, but rather something to be fought for, it can exist only through a process of struggle. The slave-master, on the other hand, experiences his freedom as inalienable and thus as a fact: he is not aware that he too has been enslaved by his own system.

To begin to answer a question we posed earlier —is it possible for a man to be in chains and at the same time be free—we can now say that the path towards freedom can only be envisioned by the slave when he actively rejects his chains. The first phase of liberation is the decision to reject the image of himself which the slave-owner has painted, to reject the conditions which the slave-owner has created, to reject his own existence, to reject himself as slave.

The Problem of Identity

Here the problem of freedom leads us directly into the question of identity. The condition of slavery is a condition of alienation: "Nature never intended that men and women should be either slaves or slaveholders, and nothing but rigid training long persisted in, can perfect the character of the one or the other". Slavery is an alienation from a natural condition, it is a violation of nature which distorts both parties—the slave and the slave-owner. Alienation is the absence of authentic identity; in the case of the slave, he is alienated from his own freedom.

This non-identity can exist on a number of levels: it can be unconscious—the slave accepts the master's definition, renders himself unfree in seeing himself as inherently unfit for freedom. Or it can be conscious, knowledge can strike a blow at it. We are most concerned with the second alternative, for it constitutes a stage in the voyage towards freedom.

The most extreme form of human alienation is the reduction to the status of property. This is how the slave was defined: something to be owned. "Personality swallowed up in the sordid idea of property! Manhood lost in chattelhood! . . . Our destiny was to be fixed for life, and we had no more voice in the decision of the question than the oxen and cows that stood chewing at the haymow."

Black people were treated as things, they were defined as objects. "The slave was a fixture," Frederick Douglass remarks. His life must be lived within the limits of that objectness, within the limits of the white man's definition of the Black man. Forced to live as if he were a fixture, the slave's perception of the world is inverted. Because his life is relegated to that of an object, he must forge his own humanity within those boundaries. "He had no choice, no goal, but was pegged down to one single spot, and must take root there or nowhere." The slave has no determination whatsoever over the external circumstances of his life. One day a woman could be living on a plantation among her children, their father, family, friends. The next day, she could be miles away with no hope of ever meeting them again. The idea of the journey loses its connotation of exploration, it loses the excitement of learning the unknown. The trip becomes a journey into hell, not away from the thingness of the slave's existence, but an even sharper accentuation of his non-human external existence. "His going out into the world was like a living man going out of sight and hearing of wife, children, and friends of kindred tie". Frederick Douglass gives a moving account of the last days of his grandmother, who having faithfully served her master from his birth to his death, having had children and grandchildren for him, is looked upon in disdain by her then present owner—the original master's grandson. She is sent into the woods to die a solitary death.

Frederick Douglass' owner reveals to him unwittingly the path toward the consciousness of his alienation:

> "If you give a nigger an inch he will take an ell. Learning will spoil the best nigger in the world. If he learns to read the Bible it will forever unfit him to be a slave. He should know nothing but the will of his master, and learn to obey it."

The slave is alienated totally insofar as he accepts his master's will as the absolute authority over his life. The slave has no will, no desires, no being—his essence, his being he must find entirely in the will of his master. What does this mean? It is partly with the slave's consent that the white man is able to perpetuate slavery—when we say consent, however, it is not free consent, but consent under the most brutal force and pressure.

The Theme of Resistance

Frederick Douglass learns from his owner's observations precisely how he is to combat his own alienation: "Very well, thought I. 'Knowledge unfits a child to be a slave'. I instinctively assented to the proposition, and from that moment I understood the direct pathway from slavery to freedom." If we look closely at the words of Frederick Douglass we can detect the theme of resistance once again. His first concrete experience of the possibility of freedom within the limits of slavery comes when he observes a slave resist a whipping. Now he transforms this resistance into a resistance of the mind, a refusal to accept the will of the master and a determination to find independent means of judging the world.

Just as the slave has used violence against the violence of the aggressor, Frederick Douglass uses

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the knowledge of his owner, i.e., that learning unfits a man to be a slave and turns it against him: he will set out to acquire knowledge, precisely because it unfits a man to be a slave. Resistance, rejection, on every level, on every front, are integral elements of the voyage towards freedom. Alienation will become conscious through the process of knowledge.

In combatting his ignorance, in resisting the will of his master, Frederick Douglass apprehends that all men should be free, and thus deepens his knowledge of slavery, of what it means to be a slave, what it means to be the negative counterpart of freedom.

> "When I was about thirteen years old, and had succeeded in learning to read, every increase of knowledge, especially anything respecting the free states, was an additional weight to the most intolerable burden of my thought—'I am a slave for life.' To my bondage I could see no end. It was a terrible reality, and I shall never be able to tell how sadly that thought chafed my young spirit".

His alienation becomes real, it surfaces, and Frederick Douglass is going to existentially experience all that is entailed by being bound to a state of unfreedom materially, while mentally finding his way towards liberation. The tension between the subjective and the objective will eventually provide the impetus towards total liberation. But before that goal is reached a whole series of phases must be traversed.

The slave, Frederick Douglass, thus mentally transcends his condition towards freedom. Herein lies the consciousness of alienation. He sees freedom concretely as the negation of his condition—it is present in the very air he breathes.

> "Liberty, as the inestimable birthright of every man, converted every object into an asserter of this right. I heard it in every sound, and saw it in every object. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretchedness, the more horrible and desolate was my condition. I saw nothing without seeing it and I heard nothing without hearing it. I do not exaggerate when I say that it looked at me in every star, smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind and moved in every storm."

He has arrived at a true recognition of his condition. That recognition is at the same time the rejection of that condition. Consciousness of alienation entails the absolute refusal to accept that alienation. But the slave's predicament, by its very contradictory nature, is impossible: enlightenment does not bring happiness, nor does it bring real freedom—it brings desolation, misery, i.e., as long as the slave does not see a concrete path out of enslavement. In speaking of his mistress, Frederick Douglass says: "She aimed to keep me ignorant, and I resolved to know, although knowledge only increased my misery."

Total Abolition Necessary

Moreover, it is not just his individual condition that the slave rejects and thus his misery is not just a result of his individual unfreedom, his individual alienation. True consciousness is the rejection of the institution itself and everything which accompanies it. "It was slavery and not its mere incidents that I hated." To foreshadow Frederick Douglass' path from slavery to freedom, even when he attains his own freedom, he does not see the real goal as having been attained. It is only with the total abolition of the institution of slavery that his misery, his desolation, his alienation will be eliminated. And not even then, for there will remain remnants and there still remain in existence today the causes which gave rise to slavery.

On this road to freedom, Frederick Douglass experiences religion as a reinforcement and justification for his desire to be free. Out of the Christian doctrine, he deduces the equality of all men before God. If this is true, he infers, then slavemasters must be defying the will of God by suppressing the will of human beings and should be dealt with in accordance with God's anger. Freedom, the abolition of slavery, liberation, the destruction of alienation—these notions receive a metaphysical justification and impetus through religion. A supernatural being wills the abolition of slavery: Frederick Douglass, slave and believer in God, must accomplish God's will by working towards the goal of liberation.

Douglass was not the only person to infer this from the Christian religion. Nat Turner received an important part of this inspiration from his faith in Christianity. John Brown was another example.

We all know that from the perspective of white, slave-owning society, Christianity was supposed to serve quite another function. The overriding idea behind exposing the slaves to religion was to provide a metaphysical justification, not for freedom, but rather for slavery.

One of Karl Marx s more notorious statements is that religion is the opium of the people. That is —religion teaches men to be satisfied with their condition in this world—with their oppression—by directing their hopes and desires into a supernatural domain. A little suffering during a person's existence in this world means nothing compared to an eternity of bliss.

Marcuse likes to point out that we often ignore the fact that Karl Marx also said that religion is the wish-dream of an oppressed humanity. On the one hand this statement means, of course, that wishes become dreams projected into a sphere beyond that over which human beings have control—I would say, an imaginary realm. But on the other

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hand, we have to ask ourselves: is there anything else implied in Marx s statement about the notion of wish dreams of an oppressed humanity. Think for a moment. Real wants, needs and desires are transformed into wish-dreams via the process of religion, because it seems so hopeless in this world: this is the perspective of an oppressed people. But what is important, what is crucial is that those dreams are always on the verge of reverting to their original status—the real wishes and needs here on earth. There is always the possibility of redirecting those wish-dreams to the here-and-now.

Frederick Douglass redirected those dreams; Nat Turner placed them within the framework of the real world. So there can be a positive function of religion because its very nature is to satisfy very urgent needs of people who are oppressed. (We are speaking only of the relation of oppressed people to religion, not attempting to analyse the notion of religion in and for itself.) There can be a positive function of religion. All that need be done is to say: let's begin to create that eternity of bliss for human society here in this world. Let's convert eternity into history.

The Role of Religion

Why is it that more Black people did not shift the emphasis from the other world to concrete reality—to history? There was a calculated effort on the part of white, slave-owning society to create a special kind of religion which would serve their interests, which would serve to perpetuate the existence of slavery. Christianity was used for the purpose of brainwashing, indoctrinating, pacifying.

Kenneth Stampp in his work, *The Peculiar Institution*, discusses extensively the role of religion in creating methods of appeasing Black people, of suppressing potential revolt. At first, Africans were not converted to Christianity because this may have given slaves a claim to freedom. However, the various slave-holding colonies passed laws to the effect that Black Christians would not automatically become free men by virtue of their baptism. Stampp formulates the reasons why it was finally decided to let slaves through the sacred doors of Christianity:

> "Through religious instruction, the bondsman learned that slavery had divine sanction, that insolence was as much an offense against God as against the temporal master. They received the biblical command that servants should obey their masters and they heard of the punishments awaiting the disobedient slave in the hereafter. They heard, too, that eternal salvation would be their reward for faithful service and that on the day of judgement God would deal impartially with the poor and the rich, the black man and the white."

Thus those passages in the Bible which emphasised obedience, humility, pacifism, patience, were presented to the slave as the essence of Christianity. Those passages, on the other hand, which talked about equality, freedom, the ones which Frederick Douglass was able to discover, because, unlike most slaves, he taught himself to read—these were eliminated from the sermons the slave heard. A very censored version of Christianity was developed especially for the slaves. A pious slave therefore would never hit a white man, his master was always right, even when he was by all human standards wrong. This use of religion was one of the most violent acts against humanity. It was used to teach a group of men that they were not men at all, it was used to abolish the last remnant of identity which the slave possessed. But, in the long run, they were not successful as can be witnessed by Frederick Douglass, Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, and countless others who turned Christianity against the missionaries. The Old Testament was particularly helpful for those who planned revolts—Children of Israel were delivered out of bondage in Egypt by God—but they fought, they fought in order to carry out the will of God. Resistance was the lesson learned from the Bible.

Frederick Douglass reaction to Nat Turner's revolt is revealing:

> "The insurrection of Nat Turner had been quelled, but the alarm and terror which it occasioned had not subsided. The cholera was then on its way to this country, and I remember thinking that God was angry with the white people because of their slaveholding wickedness, and therefore his judgements were abroad in the land. Of course it was impossible for me not to hope much for the abolition movement when I saw it supported by the Almighty, and armed with death."

I'd like to end here by pointing to the essence of what I have been trying to get across today. The road towards freedom, the path of liberation is marked by resistance at every crossroad: mental resistance, physical resistance, resistance directed to the concerted attempt to obstruct that path. I think we can learn from the experience of the slave. We have to debunk the myth that Black people were docile and accepting and the extreme myth, which by the way I read in my high school history texts in Birmingham, Alabama, that Black people actually preferred slavery to freedom.

* * *

I would like to say a few words about the course in general. Black Studies is a field which has long been neglected in the Universities. We are just beginning to fill that vacuum. And we must be very careful, because we do not want Black History, Black Literature to be relegated to the same stagnant,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

innocuous, compartmentalised existence as, say, the history of the American Revolution. I could talk about Frederick Douglass as if he had the same relevance as, say the so-called discovering of America by Columbus. History, Literature should not be pieces in a museum of antiquity, especially when they reveal to us problems which continue to exist today. The reasons underlying the demands for Black Studies Programmes are many, but the most important one is the necessity to establish a continuum from the past to the present, to discover the genesis of problems which continue to exist today, to discover how our ancestors dealt with them. We can learn from the philosophical as well as concrete experience of the slave. We can learn what methods of coming to grips with oppression were historically successful and what methods were failures. The failures are crucial, because we do not want to be responsible for the repetition of history in its brutality. We learn what the mistakes were in order not to duplicate them.

We ought to approach the content in this course not as frozen facts, as static, as meaningful only in terms of understanding the past. We are talking about philosophical themes, recurring philosophical themes. Philosophy is supposed to perform the task of generalising aspects of experience, and not just for the sake of formulating generalisations, of discovering formulas as some of my colleagues in the discipline believe. My idea of philosophy is that if it is not relevant to human problems, if it does not tell us how we can go about eradicating some of the misery in this world, then it is not worth the name of philosophy. I think that Socrates made a very profound statement when he asserted that the *raison d'être* of philosophy is to teach us proper living. In this day and age "proper living" means liberation from the urgent problems of poverty, economic necessity and indoctrination, mental oppression.

New Humanist

Developments in European Marxism: a survey of some recent books by Leslie Sklair

No. 1. October **New Humanist:** ALTHUSSER AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SOCIALIST HUMANISM

No. 2. November **New Humanist:** ANTONIO GRAMSCI AND WORKING CLASS CULTURE

New Humanist: 15p per copy from your local newsagent or branches of W. H. Smiths and John Menzies

88 Islington High Street, London N1 8EL

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The USSR, its Classes and Mr. Bonavia

Andrew Rothstein

The Soviet nations this year are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The British press has been "celebrating" it too—in its own way, blackguarding the USSR by any means that come to hand. Some weeks before his expulsion from Soviet territory in mid-May, Mr. David Bonavia, Moscow correspondent of *The Times*, made a well-thought-out contribution to the chorus, in a lengthy sociological analysis of the Soviet population. His paper headed the article "Russia's claim to be a classless society"—though even Mr. Bonavia did not venture to record any such "claim". What he did venture to say, however, was so very instructive, and so very much like an echo of what other anti-Soviet writers have said in the past—beginning with the Menshevik emigrés in 1922, and as late as anti-Communist renegades in France and Yugoslavia of recent years—that it is worth examining more closely.

1. FIGURES CAN'T LIE . . .

"According to official figures", said Mr. Bonavia, defying his headline-writer—"there are now only two classes: workers (55 per cent) and office workers (25 per cent) taken together: and collective farm workers together with small artisans (20 per cent). Obviously this classification fails to describe the variety and complexity of Soviet society. The very neatness of the figures shows how little anyone really believes in these categories, or cares about them".

"Obviously"—only Mr. Bonavia was talking nonsense. The figures published by the Central Statistical Department of the USSR don't claim "to describe the variety and complexity of Soviet society". They are simply headed: "Class Composition of the Population". And the particular figures which he mentioned have a sub-head: "(Estimate)"—which he didn't mention. So while the precise totals emerging from the 1970 Census were being established, "neat" round figures were given. But take a look at the movement of those statistics over the years, and you will get a different picture of their "neatness"—and will get, too, a genuine picture of the *real* complexity of Soviet society in the world today. The figures are taken from the annuals published by the Central Statistical Department.

Thus it turns out that (i) the real and historic "complexity" of Soviet society, which everyone in the USSR knows—even if some of Mr. Bonavia's friends don't approve of it—is that private ownership of the means of production and distribution had almost completely disappeared by the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution, 35 years ago (ii) the "neatness", which he found doesn't really exist, although the *trend* was towards those particular round figures by 1970 (iii) what does exist is an increasing proportion of wage-earners—the result

PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POPULATION

Year	Capitalists, landowners, traders, kulaks	Individual peasants & artisans	Collective farmers and artisan co-operators	Workers and employees
1913	16.3	6.7	—	17.0
1937	—	5.5	48.8	45.7
1962	—	0.1	26.3	73.6
1964	—	0.1	24.8	75.1
1966	—	0.03	23.58	76.39
1968	—	0.03	22.27	77.7
1969	—	0.03	21.56	78.41

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

both of ever-expanding industry and of the amalgamation of many collective farms into State farms in recent years, i.e. of collective farm members and artisan co-operators becoming wage-earners in State enterprise.

This is not merely "represented as the transformation of the country's class structure" (Mr. Bonavia's words). It *is* such a transformation, one which has never occurred before in history.

2. SOME WORDS ABOUT THE SOVIET PEASANTRY

Mr. Bonavia, however, gave his own interpretation of Soviet society: though on the whole it was not so much his own as borrowed, some of it from very ancient and fish-like sources already mentioned. "Broadly speaking, it is a three-class society, consisting of bureaucracy, intelligentsia and workers. Mechanisation and collectivisation make it possible to regard the peasantry as under-privileged workers, rather than as a political class in their own right".

The point about collectivisation was that, instead of poor peasants scratching a living for themselves out of a small piece of land (over 65 per cent of them in 1929), thousands, and in some cases tens of thousands, began that year to join with nearly all the middle peasants in their districts in putting the pieces together and farming the whole as a co-operative society. They began electing the management at annual meetings, and paying themselves a dividend out of the net proceeds of selling their surplus, individually or collectively, to the State or to individual citizens, once the claims of taxation, of the upkeep and improvement of their own collective farms, and of the maintenance of old people and children, had been met. This did not make them workers in any accepted sense of the word. It made them "self-employed", to borrow a term from British practice, only collectively self-employed instead of individually. And whether they were farming by the methods of 1929, using horses or oxen as their main means of traction, and sowing and reaping by hand in the main, or whether they farm by the methods of 1972, in which tractors, combine harvesters and a wealth of other technical and scientific resources are at their service, is entirely irrelevant to the question of what they are as a class.

The only exception to this general scheme is that operators of the machinery and agricultural technicians are accepted as trade unionists into the Agricultural Workers' Union. They number a little over 2 million, out of a total working population of about 17 millions on the collective farms. So it is a long way yet to most collective farmers belonging to the working class, whatever Mr. Bonavia thinks it "possible" to do.

Class and Collective Farmers

But he introduced a much worse irrelevancy, not to say confusion, when he talked about "a political class".

The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* gives the definition of class as "a division of society according to status", or "a number of individuals (persons, things) possessing common attributes". But what constitutes the status of peasants, what are their common attributes? It is not their political views—otherwise they would be a distinct political party. What makes a peasant is that he is engaged in small-scale production for himself, whether or not a landowner takes part of the produce, and whether or not the peasant has a surplus to dispose of on the market: and what makes a peasant into a collective farmer is, as already stated, that he has joined with others to run their production on co-operative lines, but still producing for themselves, to consume themselves or to dispose of to others.

Thus it is the economic, not the political, functions of the peasantry which determine their status in society and their attributes, and which make them a class. That applies to the Soviet peasantry of today as it did to their predecessors, and indeed to the peasants of all countries. It is not their politics (if they have politics) which make them a class, but their class which gives them weight in the politics of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Bonavia should do his homework better.

3. SOME WORDS ABOUT CLASSES

If he did, he would also have made the following discoveries.

"Long before me", wrote Marx in a famous letter (March 5, 1852), "bourgeois historians had described the historical development of the struggle of the classes, and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes". And indeed even the most cursory acquaintance with typical historians and economists (since capitalism arose) before Marx would reveal to Mr. Bonavia that classes have always been regarded as *social* categories, the reflection and result of the *economic* divisions of society. The outstanding French historian and reactionary politician Guizot, writing at a time (1823) when capitalist industry in France was only in its beginnings, but when the thunder of class struggle in the great French Revolution was still in the ears of a whole generation, said that it was "the relations of landed property" which determined the existence and the relations of various "strata" in society in French history. In his *History of Civilisation in Europe* (1828), written when factory industry was making its first advances in his own country and the French bourgeoisie was demanding political concessions from the landed aristocracy, Guizot wrote that it was the class struggle which filled modern

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

history: "Modern Europe was born of the struggle of different classes of society".

Later still (1850), discussing the struggle of various classes for power in the English revolution, Guizot became still more precise (the great social upheavals in France of 1848 were still a fresh memory). He drew a picture of "the bourgeoisie, country gentry, farmers and small landowners, very numerous at that time", struggling against the preponderant influence in public affairs of the great landowners. Every one of these classes had separate *economic* functions in society—but they all joined (except of course for individuals) in the common *political* struggle which Guizot described. Macaulay, again, in his review of Hallam's *Constitutional History* (1828) contrasted "the two great branches of the natural aristocracy, the capitalists and the landowners", together with "the middle class . . . (just) as anxious for the maintenance of order and the security of property", with "the fury of a mob which destroys mills and power-looms", i.e. with the working class.

When the Chartists, in May 1842, presented to Parliament a petition for manhood suffrage with 3,300,000 signatures, Macaulay delivered the weightiest speech against it. Civilisation, he said, "rests upon the security of property", and a Government elected by those with no property would mean expropriation of landed property, spoliation and national bankruptcy.

Mill and Bagehot

The political theorist of that age, Walter Bagehot, in the introduction to his *English Constitution* drew the same distinctions even more sharply, writing of the "plutocracy" in the House of Commons, and the "aristocracy" or "English gentry, titled and untitled" (i.e. the landowners) in the Lords, as the two "classes" which ruled Britain, urging them above all to pursue a skilful course in politics which would prevent the working classes—who on the average "can only earn very scanty wages by coarse labour" —from forming a political combination "as such and for their own objects". Once again, *first* classes, determined by their economic function in society, and *on that basis*, politics.

True, Bagehot was writing after Marx's letter, and his special interest was the City and finance. But he was the direct pupil of the pure economist of his day, John Stuart Mill. In the 1848 edition of his *Principles of Political Economy*, Mill wrote: "Private property being assumed as a fact, we have next to enumerate the different classes of persons to whom it gave rise". The three requisites of property, said Mill, were labour, capital and, land. "Since each of these elements of production may be separately appropriated, the industrial community" (in Mill's day this phrase did not mean what it would to a modern ear) "may be considered as divided into landowners, capitalists and productive labourers. Each of these classes, as such, obtains a share of the produce: no other person or class obtains anything except by concession from them. The remainder of the community is, in fact, supported at their expense, giving—if any equivalent—one consisting of unproductive services".

Thus, long indeed before Marx, the bourgeois writers clearly understood by classes the broad divisions of society created by its economic structure —the landowners: the owners (wholly or by shareholding) of factories, banks, merchant houses, shipping firms, railways etc.: and those who owned none of these things, able only to sell their "coarse labour" for "very scanty wages", and sometimes revolting against this situation with "the fury of a mob" which threatened "the security of property", and indeed (capitalist) "civilisation" itself.

Marx, Engels and Lenin on Classes

Marx and Engels, therefore, were really building on foundations laid by bourgeois authors when they were already writing in *The Holy Family* (1845-6) that "industry and commerce, production and the exchange of the necessities of life, themselves determine distribution, the structure of the different social classes". Throughout their work during the next half-century, whether historical, economic or political, their explanation of classes continued essentially the same. The idea of a "political class" no more entered into it than into the explanations of Guizot or Macaulay, Bagehot or Mill.

Nor does it in the fullest definition of all, made by Lenin in *A Great Beginning* (1919): "Classes are large groups of people which differ from one another by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by the dimensions of, and mode of acquiring, the share of social wealth of which they dispose. Classes are groups of people, one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy". In this definition the discerning will find absorbed, as it were, not only the words of Marx and Engels but also the ideas of their predecessors. And it applies alike to slave society, feudal society and capitalist society, as the facts of history bear out. In Socialist society classes appropriating the labour of other classes have been abolished, as the statistics quoted earlier show—and even Mr. Bonavia did not claim that they have been restored in the USSR.

But he has his own, though not entirely original, ideas about classes which do exist in the USSR. How do the facts bear *them* out?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

4. "THE BUREAUCRACY"

"The bureaucracy is the ruling class in the Soviet Union", wrote Mr. Bonavia. It should not be identified with the Communist Party, he said. A petty official may be more a member of the ruling class than a rank and file member of the Party. But nowhere did he say precisely of whom this "class" consists, although it "is numbered in millions". What makes it a class is not its size, however, so much as its "over-riding common interest: the preservation of its dominant position in society". It recruits new members mainly on the basis of "loyalty to the interests of the class they are being invited to join"—evidently knowing no more than Mr. Bonavia what advantages if any their position will afford. In fact, instead of saying in plain English what this "class" is, Mr. Bonavia sidestepped into a long catalogue of the "enormously inflated administrative machine" on which the class relies. It is worth while, before looking more closely at what the "interests of the class" are, to enquire into this machine.

It includes "several kinds of police"—and doesn't the British administrative machine too? Or what are the police (militia in the USSR, the difference being that there they are trade unionists), CID, Special Branch and Coastguard (frontier troops in the USSR, with 40,000 miles of land and sea frontiers, while Britain has 4,800)? "There are dozens of ministries and State Committees at the all-Union level alone", as well as "republican organs" (in the 15 constituent Republics of the Union, that is, and the 20 Autonomous Republics contained within their boundaries). So what? Can anyone imagine a publicly owned socialist economy without central bodies at the levels mentioned, at least to plan in broad outline, and co-ordinate where necessary, the working of its 50,000 major enterprises in dozens of different industries, nearly 20,000 building organisations, over 48,000 state and collective farms covering a wide variety of crops and livestock in different climates, 680,000 retail shops and hundreds of wholesale trade organisations, 84,000 miles of railways, 96,000 miles of working inland waterways and 360,000 miles of internal airlines—all distributed over a country with five times the population of Great Britain and 90 times its size? Then he refers to the trade unions—a fine "administrative machine" indeed, with 98,000,000 members (all bureaucrats?), with barely 10 per cent of the 4,000 members of the 25 Union ECs full-time, less than 8,000 of the nearly 160,000 members of Republic and Regional Committees full-time, and barely 30,000 of the 4 million members of about 650,000 works, factory and office committees on full time (in the largest factories).

We shall come back to the trade unions later, in a different connection. Much the same proportions apply to the "local party committees"—the vast majority lay members—which Mr. Bonavia added to the administrative machine. But he also included press workers, which suggests that he never put his nose inside a Moscow newspaper office, let alone any of the Republic, regional, provincial town or district newspaper.

In fact, one might have thought that he had been converted to the Anarchist theory that all this—industry, agriculture, transport, home and foreign trade, economic development of vast areas inhabited by upwards of 60 major nationalities, as well as the trade union movement—could be run by leaving it all to local management and without any central direction or guidance. Engels had some caustic remarks on such ideas and what happened when they were applied in practice, when Anarchists revolted in Spain nearly a century ago (*Bakuninists at Work*, October 1873). But after all Mr. Bonavia works for *The Times*, which has never noticeably advocated Anarchism. Or perhaps he and his paper would like that to happen . . . in the USSR?

Mr. Bonavia's Fantasies

But the outstanding thing about Mr. Bonavia's fantasies, when all is said and done, is still that he did not give the slightest indication of what the "interests" of the "bureaucracy" were, why in other words they were holding on to power. He could hardly suggest that the economy had become their property, in the same way as the bulk of the economy of Britain is the property of a tiny handful of monopoly capitalists. It would be risky for him even to repeat the old rubbish about untold wealth, luxury and "orgies" of the supposed rulers of the Soviet Union, when anyone can see that, apart from a car, a country cottage and elementary protection for the privacy and security of highly responsible people who work 12, 14 or more hours a day, they have no such privileges. Nor is it true, as is sometimes suggested, (not in this particular case by Mr. Bonavia), that the children of this elusive bureaucracy become their heirs in bureaucracy, so to speak, with special schools, jobs assured, etc. What is true is that occasionally the Soviet press prints a lurid story of someone in local authority abusing his position to allocate jobs, flats or something else in short supply to his cronies or relations—but always as a picture of *abuses*, involving usually prosecution and in any case demotion and public censure.

Particularly flimsy was Mr. Bonavia's one attempt to justify his words about "the class interests of the bureaucracy" by referring to Soviet foreign policy. Very few Russians, he wrote, "really believe that their security and interests are best served by nuclear confrontation with the United States": consequently, the real purpose of that "confrontation" is to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

justify the demand for unity and discipline at home, he said. A more flagrant example of question-begging could hardly be imagined. If his words meant anything, they meant that the Soviet leaders *want* such nuclear confrontation—when the whole record, ever since the atom bomb and then the hydrogen bomb were first brought out into the open by the United States, shows that the Soviet Union has from the outset called for the abolition of both, and advanced many proposals for bringing that about. Mr. Bonavia, if he were really concerned about confrontation, need only have read the careful accounts written by non-Communists like Professor Fleming in the USA (*The Cold War*) or Mr. Philip Noel-Baker in this country (*The Arms Race*). But of course if the Soviet Union had avoided "confrontation", in the first years after the war, by accepting American supremacy in the field of nuclear weapons, *The Times* and Mr. Bonavia would doubtless have been quite satisfied. It is on the cards, in fact, that Mr. Bonavia did meet some "Russians" who thought that their security and interests would be "best served" by truckling to the USA. Individuals fascinated by American civilisation can be found even in the USSR. From November 1917 onwards they have been called "internal emigrants". Some of them are familiar figures in the entourage of some correspondents of foreign newspapers. . . .

5. BUREAUCRATS AT WORK

However, there still remains the point: is there *a bureaucracy* in the Soviet Union, whether you call it a "class" or something else? In the search for objective facts about this, in June, 1972, I went to the Central Council of Trade Unions, and then on to the head office of the Union of State Employees, numbering some 3 million members: it maintains relations in Britain with NALGO, the Inland Revenue Staffs and other kindred unions. About 2 millions work in offices—the 33 civil Ministries, the State Bank, State Committees and their auxiliary bodies (less in fact, in proportion to the population, than in Great Britain). The rest are workers in auxiliary production, stores, the fire brigades, the militia, etc. Moreover they are far from having privileges which put them above the rest of the population. Their average wage, last year, was 123 roubles a month, as against 135 in industry. They have no automatic "increments", like British Civil Servants.

They are recruited, not by examination like British Civil Servants during the last hundred years, but by the same methods as workers in industry: by advertisement, talks to school leavers and so forth, and are given one or two months training on starting. They have absolutely no special privileges in respect of holidays, as compared with other workers: the same 18-24 working days, i.e. 3-4 weeks, after 11 months' work, as in industry. They have in fact fewer holiday homes as yet than workers in industry. The heads of departments in the Ministries—those who would be regarded as in the "administrative class" in the British system—get no more pay than the director of a medium sized factory.

In short, "men from the Ministry" in the USSR are members of the working class, organised as such, leading the lives of workers and sharing the working conditions of their fellow workers. They ridicule the suggestion that they are part of a "bureaucracy".

On that aspect I had the opportunity also of talking in very informal conditions with a Minister in charge of a key department of the Soviet economy. I said to him: "But even if there is not a *class* of bureaucrats, as our *Times* pundit writes, the Soviet newspapers do say a good deal about *cases* of bureaucracy?". "That's just it", he said. "In such a huge country and with our history, one can't guarantee that there won't be cases of neglect of duty, indifference to citizens' needs, even abuses of power. But the first thing the Party requires of us is that we should fight such cases". I asked the Minister how they do this in his Ministry—a nation-wide organisation with 2,500 employees in Moscow and regional offices, the latter also under the parallel control of the local Soviets. This was his reply.

Combating Bureaucracy

"First come letters from citizens: we get scores of them daily, and a weekly summary is drawn up for the Collegium (Board) of the Ministry. Most are complaints, not necessarily on behalf of the particular writer: most too contain practical proposals, which we discuss and take immediate action on, one way or another.

"Then comes the work of the control organisations. We have an inspection department within the Ministry, which constantly visits the regional bodies. The trade union organisations within the Ministry regularly discuss reports from the various departments, as well as from the Board itself, on problems which have arisen either at the Ministry or in its relations with regional and local organisations. A most powerful machinery of supervision of our work comes in from outside—the Peoples' Control, worker-delegates elected by factories and other organisations, who constantly go through the letters we have had from citizens or local bodies, and check up on the action which has been taken.[1]

[1] The character of this organisation is well illustrated by a remark of the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Estonia that in his Republic full time workers of the People's Control number 69, while volunteers unpaid number over 48,000 (*Kommunist*, No. 10, 1972).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In addition, the Deputy Ministers have regular days in turn for receiving citizens who have complaints or suggestions to make; and the Deputy Ministers in rotation also report on the work of the Ministry to the Central Council of Trade Unions itself: this is one of our big occasions too. And our regional and local departments are subjected to the same scrutiny—by the People's Control and the Regional Councils of Trade Unions.

"So far as I have observed, and I have been a good deal abroad, this system doesn't prevail in capitalist countries. Of course it doesn't provide 100 per cent guarantees, however strictly it is applied. Cases of bureaucratic behaviour still slip through the net. At that stage come the exposures in the Party and Soviet press which you have already mentioned. There are no bureaucrats who can stand up to that".

From the beginnings of Soviet power in Russia and until his last days, Lenin hammered away at the origins of bureaucracy in a society which had overthrown the capitalists: it still bore what Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* had called the "birthmarks" of the society which had preceded it—particularly, among the working people, ignorance, lack of experience in running the State, lack of culture. And Lenin hammered away even more vigorously at the only way to eliminate bureaucracy in the long run (he laughed at those who thought you could do it quickly). While raising the general level of education and culture as rapidly as possible, it was essential to involve the widest possible mass of workers, both party and non-party, in supervising, inspecting, correcting errors, exposing abuses.

For fifty years now Lenin's ideas have been set to work more and more effectively, despite terrible external obstacles which gave the opportunity for a period of abuses of power, as everyone knows. Yet more results have been achieved in the Soviet Union in combating bureaucracy—despite all the setbacks—than in any other country in history. Not to see this, and still more to go on chattering about "the bureaucracy" as a *class*, is the mark of sheer political illiteracy.

6. THE INTELLIGENTSIA

Anyone who followed the writing of Mr. Bonavia during his three years' service for *The Times* in Moscow will have noted that a good many of his observations about bureaucracy appear to have arisen from his disputes with the Soviet Foreign Office about where he or others could go and whom they could see. But when it came to the intellectuals, he (like others) always had an abundance of a special kind of contact and of unusual information at his disposal. And this was well reflected in what he now wrote about the "class of intelligentsia".

Its main political function, he said, was "to produce novels, pictures and plays which will help to persuade the workers that they are the true masters of Soviet society". Gifted film producers have to "glamorise the life of manual labourers, most of whom, given half the opportunity, would much prefer to be film producers". Historians "have to manipulate the past", and so on. The intelligentsia in this way was "used to prevent the workers from protesting about their standard of living—the thing which matters most to them as a class". But the workers are not thereby prevented from being "suspicious and resentful"—because the intelligentsia gets material privileges "which the workers do not enjoy". True, in the early stages of their career, said Mr. Bonavia, they "earn less than a reasonably competent worker of the same age", and have less chance of getting a self-contained flat or high quality medical treatment. But in the long run the intellectuals "win out": an academician's standard of living "may approach that of the political leadership" (Mr. Bonavia did not say what that was), and a member of an artists' union could "dine well every night at his club", find it easier to buy a car, and would have access to "special doctors . . . probably better than the doctors at the factory polyclinic".

However, in order to get all this, the intelligentsia must "remain conformist enough to retain the favour of the bureaucracy, or be exceptionally talented". Otherwise it is controlled through salaries, jobs and travel permits and, as regards "the huge majority of Soviet intellectuals", by the threat of "police methods". But there is an exceptional minority. "People of genuine talent" won't truckle to this system. There are "independent people" who remind "the others" of a "higher calling"—for example, "a too independent-minded editor" (who of course gets removed). The Medvedev brothers and Dr. Sakharov, by their actions, "suggest that there are strong elements who are increasingly restive at the position of their class as an underdog".

Mr. Bonavia obviously has not heard the story about the woman who proudly said that "every one was out of step except our Jock". Adding up all the elements of his picture, one gets a queer feeling of *Alice Through the Looking Glass*—or of a Socialist country viewed through the windows of the Press Department or "Russian Bureau" of the British Embassy in Moscow. When it was read out to the leaders of the Cultural Workers' Union and the Educational Workers' Union, or to well-known members of the Union of Soviet Writers—not a trade union but a professional organisation—their ridicule was only tempered by the sobering thought that such rubbish was served up in a serious and influential newspaper like *The Times*.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Who are the Intellectuals?

To begin with, it will be seen that Mr. Bonavia reduced the Soviet intelligentsia to successful novelists, playwrights, film producers, artists at the top of their profession, academicians and writers of historical works: with aspiring juniors hoping to make the grade in each case. But on the same page of the same Year Book of the Central Statistical Department in which he found his neat and unbelievable figures he could have read that "in 1926 there were less than 3 million workers mainly occupied in intellectual labour, whereas now they number over 30 million people". Like the man in the Russian story who went to the Zoo and didn't notice the elephant, Mr. Bonavia didn't notice about 29.9 millions of the intelligentsia who neither exercise top executive functions nor are top level artists, academics, writers, etc.

"What about our 4 million teachers in primary, secondary, technical and pre-school education, our over 2 million students in higher education, our 1 million other educational workers?" asked the Chairman of the Educational Workers' Union. "Aren't they intellectuals, have they no voice? What about the 1 million scientific workers, only 2,500 of whom are academicians? Do they really never open their mouths to criticise?" And the same was the reaction, an hour later, at the Cultural Workers Union, with its 2 million members. "He seems to have forgotten the 35,000 rank and file actors and other artistes in our 500 theatres, the workers with a higher education who run our more than 1,100 museums, the workers with higher or advanced secondary education who work in our 128,000 libraries, the workers of the same standard who run our 134,000 clubs—100,000 of them in the countryside? What right has your Mr. Bonavia to deny them the standing of intellectuals—not to speak of the vast majority of our journalists and other press workers, radio and TV and film workers, musicians etc., all working full time at their profession but who haven't reached the star level? All these belong to the intelligentsia. But they are trade unionists, with the rights and activities of trade unionists. They have the same standing and opportunities of criticism as all other Soviet citizens, whose general standard of living they share. They show their independence as intellectuals in many ways of which Mr. Bonavia appears to be unaware—and examples of what he calls the restive minority (a very tiny one too) are not attractive".

Amateurs and Professionals

Among the vast majority of intellectuals other than the stars mentioned by Mr. Bonavia there are of course (as others I talked with in other unions pointed out) nearly 4 million managers, heads of departments, production engineers and other technicians in industry with a professional and higher education: there are nearly 1 million occupying similar positions in agriculture, 500,000 in transport and communications, 600,000 in building, $1\frac{3}{4}$ millions in the health services. All these have a specialised or higher education, all are full-time workers in their professions, and all have a more effective voice in controlling their publicly-owned places of work than journalists on *The Times* have in their millionaire-owned establishment. And where have these millions of intellectuals in production come from?

Compared with those listed by the two unions mentioned earlier, the people who have become top-level professionals are a very tiny proportion. There are many thousands of beginning writers, members of amateur literary circles in factory and collective farm clubs: but those who have qualified by their experience to become members of the Union of Soviet Writers number just under 7,300. There are over 340,000 members of amateur music circles—but less than 1,800 have become members of the Union of Composers. There are 13,000 members of the Union of Soviet Artists—but the number of beginning artists taking part in adult amateur art circles alone, at their factory or collective farm (and therefore members of the union catering for their industry or the collective farm while they earn their living) alone runs into many times that number. There are 4,650 members of the Film Workers' Union—but there are over 40,000 active members of the 3,000 amateur cinema studios and film circles run by the various trade unions alone, as the annual report of the Soviet TUC mentions. The point is that in the course of their amateur activities they learn, if they wish, to become professionals which qualifies them for membership of one or other of the creative unions. There is no barrier separating one set of groups from the other.

7. WHERE DO THE INTELLIGENTSIA COME FROM?

The fact is that between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of the intelligentsia come from the ranks of the workers and peasants, and were educated in Soviet times. That is why they function as trade unionists in their public life (whatever their professional speciality) like any steel worker, miner or office employee. That too is why the "suspicious and resentful" workers are either a figment of Mr. Bonavia's imagination or the invention of those real "bureaucrats" (one could find a harsher description) who consider that the British taxpayer maintains them, as a famous English diplomat, Sir Henry Wotton, said of his profession 370 years ago, "to lie abroad for the good of their country".

Of course at the beginning of the revolution there were famous intellectuals who, although from

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

classes which were profoundly counter-revolutionary, themselves were honourable exceptions who threw in their lot with the workers and peasants. Such were the famous poets Blok and Briusov, sons of a professor and a wealthy merchant respectively: such were the writers Alexei Tolstoy, from one of the oldest Russian aristocratic families, and Ilya Ehrenburg, son of a well-to-do brewery manager.

But if Mr. Bonavia had done some real research, he would have discovered characteristic facts like the following from the press alone (though there are many opportunities for foreign correspondents in the USSR to meet scholars, scientists and leading technicians on social occasions). Vladimir Kirillin, academician and chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technique, began life as a fitter. Boris Petrov, academician and chairman of the "Intercosmos" Committee, started as a turner. Jan Peive, son of a peasant, is Learned Secretary of the Academy of Sciences. These are all famous men.

Others less famous are all the more important for Mr. Bonavia's education. A. A. Panin, physicist engineer, began as a village boy who got a job as a stoker in a factory. S. A. Tatvosov, engineer in a research institution, began as a shoemaker's apprentice and returned to this job after military service, before beginning his higher education. A. M. Klochkov, head of an agricultural research laboratory with 40 learned papers published, began as sanitary orderly in a Simbirsk hospital. N. V. Litovchenko, professor at an institute of mining metallurgy, started as a shepherd boy and got into the workers' (preparatory) faculty at the Magnitogorsk iron works. Or there is such an outstanding case as the academician and nuclear scientist Vassili Yemelyanov, son of a poor Baku oil worker, who started work at 10 in the same job.

Are the writers different? The brilliant playwright Alexander Korneichuk was a labourer in railway workshops, and got his first training in literature in the workers' faculty at a Kiev literary institute. Mikhail Stelmakh, outstanding Ukrainian post-war novelist, was a hired farm labourer in early life. Yanka Kupala, the Belorussian national poet, was also a farm labourer and then an unskilled worker at a factory. A village blacksmith's son, Alexander Tvardovsky, became one of the best known poets and editor of the literary monthly *Novy Mir* (until a few months before his death from cancer in 1971). A poor peasant's son, Alexei Surkov, also became an outstanding poet. Yuri Trifonov, novelist, was in 1942 a worker in the tube-drawing shop of a Moscow aircraft factory. One of the most sensitive Russian lyric poets now living, Margarita Aligher, is the daughter of a poor Jewish clerk. The Ukrainian dramatist, Igor Muratov, is a former steel worker. The Azerbaijan poet, Salmanov, was an oil worker at Baku. Boris Glebov, a worker at the great "Red Putilov" (Kirov) works in Leningrad, had his moving poems of youth printed first in his works newspaper: then they appeared in the national press; and they were raising him to literary fame when he was killed in battle in August 1941.

Or there is this case. Nikolai Fedorenko, editor of the monthly *Foreign Literature* and one of the leaders of the Union of Soviet Writers, is the son of a carpenter and worked himself at the trade until his father, who had fought as a partisan in the Civil War, got him to go to secondary school. He had been Soviet Ambassador at the United Nations, he had written a number of books, now he was an editor: but, he said to me, "I remain a woodworker, I keep my hand in at home, and I could go back to my trade too, if need be". The Soviet intellectual, said Fedorenko, "is flesh and blood of his people—and what Mr. Bonavia says is not original. History repeats itself: whenever an enemy speaks about our country and our people, it always comes to the same thing".

How Did it Come About?

The list could be extended enormously, and in far more fields than those mentioned. But the essential point is: how did it come about that so many who, in the hard conditions of workers and peasants during the years of Tsardom or in the first few years of Soviet power, had very little education, let alone cultivated leisure and opportunities for what some middle-class intellectuals in Britain call "gracious living", nevertheless have made an indelible mark in Soviet cultural life?

Basically it is because the working class and the peasantry of the former Russian Empire, released forever from their servitude by the October Revolution, have eagerly seized on the educational and cultural opportunities which were thereby opened up. It is unnecessary to quote a mass of statistics illustrating this process in many fields. They are summed up in the figures which show the numbers who had had higher and complete secondary education:

	1913	1959	1972
Higher	300,000	3,800,000	9,400,000
Secondary		19,500,000	44,400,000

And of course the overwhelming majority of those with education above the primary level in 1913 came from the privileged classes. The working class has taken the lead in this change: workers with a higher or secondary education numbered 82 per thousand in 1939, 386 in 1959 and 550 in 1970.

It is the immense growth of general education, coupled with the consciousness of taking an increasingly active part in the management of public affairs which reinforces their political education,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that has awakened the interest of millions of working people in the arts and sciences and intellectual pursuits generally. For this they need no film directors to "glamorise" their lives. There is scarcely any large industrial establishment nowadays that has not among its workers at the bench people who have graduated at least to the level of "Candidate" (B.Sc.)—by correspondence courses at University extension departments, or at evening classes in the works branch of an institute, or at a local technical college. Some have gone further, taking their Doctorate. For the same reasons there have developed the study-circles mentioned earlier. The report of the Central Council of Trade Unions to their 15th Congress this year shows 9,300,000 trade unionist members of amateur art circles alone in 1968, and over 10 millions in 1971. This too is why one of the most popular events in a factory club is the visit of a poet or a prose writer to read his or her work and discuss it with those interested—many of whom have begun their literary career already in shop wall newspapers or in the printed works paper, like Boris Glebov.

A few examples are worth quoting here. Alexander Andreyev, author of very successful novels, and formerly a carpenter at a Gorky factory, read his first novel to blacksmiths at the Gorky motor works before submitting it to publishers (*Trud* 2 February, 1972). Ivan Gudov, worker at the First State Ball-Bearing works in the 30s, reported on his latest novel at a crowded readers' conference in the trade union library of the same works this year. This event was part of a nation-wide "All-Union Readers' Conference" organised jointly by the Union of Soviet Writers and the Central Council of Trade Unions, which took the form of meetings at factories, building jobs, State and collective farms, in which 40 recent literary works in all were discussed (*Soviet Trade Unions*, No. 9, 1972). All this summer "Weeks of Soviet Literature" have been held in many parts of the country, at which several hundred poets, novelists and short story writers have reported on their work at such meetings: 200 were held in the Altai Territory of Central Siberia, 60 in the Kuban Cossack region, 80 in Tyumen Region of Western Siberia, etc.

Worker-Intellectuals

One intermediate stage in the development of workers at the bench into worker-intellectuals is represented by the numerous literary newspapers (15 of them, in the main languages of the Soviet Union, published in the capitals of the Union Republics), and the principal literary monthlies, of which there are 77, in 27 languages of the USSR, with a total print last year of 1,850,000. Mr. Bonavia from his writings seems to know only a few of these publications which appear in Moscow and Leningrad. Yet the journals as a whole present a striking picture of the worker or peasant graduating, as it were, from the factory or district paper into the world of more professional writers, without ceasing to be worker or peasant. This process takes various forms.

Thus (all in 1972) *Ural* (print 60,000), published at Sverdlovsk, carried the reminiscences of T. E. Isayev, assembly worker, about the building of the first "walking" excavator: *Baikal* (17,000), published at Ulan-Ude, printed reminiscences by a foundryman, S. B. Metelitsa, of his life when the big Electrical Engineering Works were being put up there: *Volga* (32,000), published at Saratov, printed the memoirs of a famous engineer, A. N. Busygin, on the Stakhanovite movement of the 30s in which he was a leading figure.

Or there are the volumes of poetry published by the factory writers' groups themselves. Here are a few titles I have jotted down. "*The First Smelting.* Poems by members of the Literary Group at the Kirov Works, Leningrad" (1961). "*Works Flashes.* Poems of the Dynamo Literary Group at the Lihachov Auto Works, Moscow" (1965). In the Soviet trade union fortnightly *Sovetskie Profsoyuzy* (No. 16, 1968), Yuri Kortnev, turner and member of the "Vysota" Literary Club at the Dynamo Works, Moscow, had a full page for a critical assessment of recent verse by the well-known poet Voznesensky. In 1970 members of the Literary Group at the Chelyabinsk Iron and Steel Works published a volume of their poetry entitled *Springs of Fire.*

As Morris Foresaw

If Mr. Bonavia had troubled to study life in the Soviet factory—and if he knew the writings of William Morris on Socialism, perhaps an even more doubtful event—he might have been struck by the extraordinary resemblance of these cultural opportunities (and some achievements) of factory workers in the USSR to the anticipations of that great English Socialist. In a lecture delivered in 1885, *Useful Work versus Useless Toil*, Morris wrote that "the very factory system, under a reasonable order of things . . . would at least offer opportunities for a full and eager social life surrounded by many pleasures. The factories might be centres of intellectual activity also". He developed this idea further in another lecture the same year, *Work in a Factory as it might be* (speaking of a Socialist system):

> "Such a factory will surely be a centre of education: any children who seem likely to develop gifts towards its special industry would gradually and without pain, amidst their book-learning, be drawn into technical instruction which would bring them

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> at last into a thorough apprenticeship for their craft. . . . This education so begun for the child will continue for the grown man, who will have every opportunity to practise the niceties of his craft, if he be so minded, to carry it on to the utmost degree of perfection. . . . Similar opportunities will be afforded him to study, as deeply as the subject will bear, the science on which his craft is founded; besides, a good library and help in studying it will be provided by every productive group (or factory), so that the worker's other voluntary work may be varied by the study of general science or literature. . . . It will have ample buildings for library, school-room, dining hall and the like; social gatherings, musical or dramatic entertainments will obviously be easy to manage under such conditions".

It would be sufficient to study the programme of a typical Palace of Culture at a Soviet factory—not yet at the same level everywhere, but everywhere at some stage of advance—and that of the works technical school (in the largest works, the branch of some institution of higher education), to understand why literature and the arts, as well as technical education, are more and more becoming a prerogative of the Soviet workman as Morris foresaw, no less than of the academically trained Soviet intellectual.

Did all this come about by orders or swindling tricks of the "bureaucracy", transmitted by some "conformist" intelligentsia anxious to dine well at their club? No, all Mr. Bonavia's balderdash will not avail to explain it. The plain facts are that (i) the Soviet intelligentsia is part and parcel of the working people of the Soviet Union, it has no separate destinies and no separate ideology from the rest of its people (ii) the working people themselves are now in the main enlightened citizens of a Socialist community, no more suffering "alienation" from art and literature, science and advanced technology, than they are from ownership of, and from a sense of responsibility for, the means of production and the disposal of the surplus product of Soviet economy (iii) Mr. Bonavia's three years' work in Moscow has provided him with no understanding whatsoever of the role and the moods of the Soviet intelligentsia as a whole.

8. THE WORKERS

And his understanding of the working class is if anything worse still. He has viewed through the eyes of a British petty-bourgeois intellectual, utterly remote from the working class struggle of his own country, a class of workers who for twenty years before 1917 outpaced the proletariat of the rest of Europe in heroic battles, organised in total illegality, against a bloody and repressive absolutism backed financially by British and French "democracy"; who under Bolshevik leadership carried out the October Revolution and played the chief organising part in waging victorious war against British and other invasions in 1918-1922, as well as in winning the support of the working class in Britain and other countries. The workers were the main force leading the people in the building of Socialism in the inter-war years, in spite of economic and political difficulties put in their way by "western democracy" run by imperialism. They formed the backbone of the Red Army which bore the brunt of the war against the Nazis. And they have performed equally astonishing feats in leading the rebuilding of their ravaged country and of developing it on its Socialist foundations since 1945. Not to see this, and not to be impressed by it as the outstanding fact in Soviet life, is a feat in itself. Any reader of *The Times* who made a careful study of Mr. Bonavia's messages from Moscow, over the years he was there—when scarcely a mention of working class achievement from his pen enlightened us—must admit that such a feat is not beyond him.

He suggested in the article under review that the Soviet working class could be kidded by a "class" of intellectuals into believing that they are masters of society when they are not: in other words, that they are a class of imbeciles, perhaps suspicious and resentful, but still imbeciles. Old hands may remember the far from pro-Soviet American journalist H. R. Knickerbocker, who in the '30s broadcast his ridicule of such a proposition. After travelling thousands of miles in the Soviet Union, he said, he had found that the workers were a cocky lot: they seemed to think that they owned the place—"and I have never met a slave who thought he was the boss". Mr. Bonavia evidently thinks otherwise. He wrote that the intervention of the intelligentsia prevents the Soviet workers from "protesting about their standard of living, which matters most to them as a class"—as though the workers' standard of living has not steadily gone up by all recognisable tests, which many an experienced British trade unionist has recorded: as though the Soviet workers don't publicly criticise bad conditions in national newspapers available to foreign correspondents, as well as in local newspapers which the British Embassy studiously collects, in terms that would cause consternation or worse in capitalist countries: and as though the Soviet workers have not shown, time and again, that such questions as international solidarity in particular (the 1926 British General Strike and miners lock-out, support for the Spanish Republic in 1936-8, and for Cuba and Vietnam since the Second World War) take priority for them at crucial moments, even over their immediate material interests.

Particularly ludicrous was the remark that manual labourers, "given half the opportunity" would

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prefer to be film producers. That might apply in many countries. But Mr. Bonavia needed this absurdity in order to buttress his statement that Soviet workers are "suspicious and resentful" of the intelligentsia. Members of a British delegation who visited the Soviet Union in 1950—particularly two of its active members working at the Rolls-Royce factories in Derby and Glasgow—may recall the taxi driver at Kharkov at the moment when we were passing a construction site where a big block of flats for University teachers was going up. It was a time when the destruction of war, particularly in the much-fought-over Ukraine, was still painfully visible. My colleagues had asked, tongue in cheek: "Don't the workers resent the intellectuals getting such preference?" The driver even stopped the car to emphasise his point. "But we *want* them to have good conditions. All these intellectuals are workers or peasants. The Government has given them the opportunity to study and be trained. Of course it costs money. But it will be for the good of the country, it will be to our benefit, if they become well-trained people. We are proud to be able to give our intellectuals these conditions".

As for the "top people" among the intellectuals—film stars and producers, their colleagues on the stage and in the concert hall, the famous writers and academicians—it is indeed grotesque to imagine that the workers and collective farmers who pack their auditoriums and buy up their books in scores, sometimes hundreds of thousands, of copies (I refer of course not to specialised works) are responding to the enjoyment and enlightenment they receive with "resentment" or "suspicion".

9. WORKERS ON BONAVIA

I had the opportunity to raise these questions, and many more, on Friday, 23 June, 1972, at the "Krasny Proletarii" Heavy Machine Tool Works in Moscow, employing several thousand people. At my request a group of 12 workers from different parts of the plant had assembled round the table to hear what Mr Bonavia had to say about them. Here are their names and jobs—Boris Filipov, fitter: Fyodor Novikov, milling machine operator: Zinaida Zheltyakova, also milling machine operator: Anna Yegorova, grinding machine operator: Vyacheslav Pashkov, turner: Serafima Yeriomina, painter: Yuri Novitsky, grinder: Anatoli Rybakov, machine tool operator: Viktor Petuhov, machine tool operator: Gennadi Baikov, charge-hand: Yevgeni Akulin, deputy production manager: Oleg Korolyov, engineer, secretary of the Works Party Committee. Zinaida, Anna and Serafima were of course women. Akulin and Korolyov had been through the plant as workmen, before being sent for the training which gave one his managerial post and the other his engineer's diploma.

I read out to them every word that Mr. Bonavia had written about their position, their views, and their relations with what he called "the other classes". It would not be easy to convey their initial stupefaction and incredulous laughter, then their polite observations that Mr. Bonavia was evidently mistaken or hadn't understood, and finally—that is for 75 per cent of the two hours I was with them—their sarcastic comments.

We took up first the question of "the bureaucracy". They wanted to know who exactly this "bureaucracy" was—and of course could get no answer from the article. *Filipov* is chairman of the Works Committee: spare time, like most of them nowadays, and eight years in this post. "Of course my job is to see that the management doesn't infringe the labour laws and provides the conditions for good working. Now and then we have to argue with them. But a bureacracy . . . ? Why, all of them are former workers at the bench, some in these works. We treat them, and they treat us, as fellow workers. They are all members of the Union, anyway". *Yegorova:* "I have worked 30 years in this factory. My children are working here too. Bureaucracy? Well, one of our charge hands was demoted for being picked up drunk in the street: but he is a good workman. So we went to the Director, and told him. He said, if the workman gave a pledge never to repeat it, he could work on six months probation. Well, he did, and the works order reinstating him as chargehand was signed. Was that the act of a bureaucrat? We called it common sense". *Petuhov:* "Look at our deputy production manager here. He has worked at this place since 1942: passed through the technical school at the works and became a charge hand. For eight years he continued his technical education in the evenings, and got his engineer's diploma. Then he was made shop manager, and now he has got this post. We all know him from A to Z. What kind of a bureaucrat is he?" (General laughter). *Akulin:* "I know what they would do with me if I showed signs of becoming one!" (More laughter). Someone said housing is their biggest problem still. *Korolyov:* "Yes, and who allots the new houses? Some bureaucrat? No, our Works Committee does it, jointly with the Borough Soviet's Housing Committee. Last year 250 flats were allotted to our Works: 70 per cent of them went to our workmen. This year we are getting 300 flats". *Filipov* again: "By the way, there is our Party secretary: a young chap, and how did he get the post? It was we who elected him—and we can easily get rid of him, if he shows signs of becoming a bureaucrat" (general merriment, in which Korolyov joined).

Workers and Intelligentsia

Perhaps they took more seriously the charge that

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the intelligentsia is something separate from the workers. Several of them mentioned colleagues who had taken a technical education in the works and then returned to the bench. *Rybakov* was one of them. *Novitsky* gave some practical examples of the close connection between the workers and the professional intelligentsia. "There's the People's Artist Gubanov, now acts at the Moscow Art Theatre. He is a former turner of ours, was in Leningrad during the blockade. He attended the Art Theatre Studio after 1950, and became a full-time actor. But every time there is an All-Union Subbotnik, he comes back here and works at his old planing machine. Last time he earned four roubles 75 kopecks for the fund. By the way, our works has had close connection with the Art Theatre for 20 years now, and two years ago they helped us to run a University of Culture here". "Tell the comrade about yourself, Yuri", interjected someone. "Well, I was an officer, a senior lieutenant, in the war: now I am on a grinding machine, earning 400 a month usually, with bonuses, and quite happy. So let that correspondent shed no tears over me", said *Novitsky*. "What about preferring to be a film producer?" I asked. *Petuhov:* "I think some film producers after we have criticised them would prefer to be workmen. You need real talent to be a good film producer, just like a good workman or a good engineer. And by the way some of them are not talented. Of course everyone wants to live better—but we know how to get that: we have to work better. That applies to film producers too". *Filipov:* "What your correspondent doesn't appear to know is that our working class today is different from what it was 20 or 30 years ago. Practically all have taken eight or ten classes in the middle school" (i.e. up to 15 or 17). "Resentful? No! Our intellectuals are sometimes jealous of the workers" (general laughter, and shouted requests to "put this down", "don't forget to say that").

At this point I was irresistibly reminded of a famous picture by Repin. It is in the Russian State Museum at Leningrad, and Mr Bonavia might even have seen it. Entitled: "Zaporozhie Cossacks write a letter to the Turkish Sultan", it depicts a band of those renowned warriors in the colourful trappings and arms of the period (16th-17th century), roaring with laughter or smiling sarcastically as they collectively dictate—or at least as their leader dictates while others make their own "juicy" additions—an outrageous message to the traditional enemy. The scribe who is writing it all down with his goose quill is himself smiling cunningly, but keeps his eyes on the paper. The spirit of the freemen which the great Russian painter caught, 90 years ago, certainly reigned in the Works Committee meeting room that evening.

Filipov took up the case again, "aided" from time to time by the others. "Ridiculous to say that we need someone to glamorise our lives! We know the tremendous job the working class of our country has done, building up the machinery of Socialist production. Tell the correspondent that we work on ultra-modern machine tools nowadays, which need educated men and women—not the machines of Peter the Great's time! And what about the inventions and suggestions for the improvement of production we make—are they a sign of our resentment?" Prodded, he admitted that he had made four such proposals in 1971 which had been accepted, and two already in 1972. "If we were not satisfied, we wouldn't keep quiet either. The decisions of the collective are binding on the Director. Our trade unions have the right to show their distrust of bad managers—and if necessary they go. Let Mr. Bonavia tell us, is there any capitalist country where such rights exist?"

I have had perforce to select only some salient points from this highly instructive—and entertaining—talk.

10. MORE FACTS ABOUT SOVIET WORKERS

But behind that conversation were unquestionable and dominating facts of working class life in the Soviet Union which are reflected in trade union reports, daily newspapers, journals and statistics. In all plants and organisations with over 100 workers their economic, financial and production results, draft plans and in general everything connected with planning inside the plant, the training of workers and their proper grading, problems arising out of wages and bonuses, the improvement of working conditions and equipment, standards of output and quality, new housing programmes—practically all the basic concerns of the establishment—are laid before the standing production conference, whose decisions are binding on the management, and which works under the direction of the factory committee of the union. There are about 160,000 such conferences, meeting at least half-yearly, with about 6 million members elected for 12 months: two-thirds of them are workers.

Then there is the knowledge that, while basic wage rates are negotiated by trade union executive committees with the appropriate Ministries, in the framework of general agreements negotiated by the Central Council of Trade Unions with the Government itself, detailed application and variations of the rates, bonuses, norms of output, are determined by collective agreements at factory level. These, to be valid, must be approved clause by clause at the workers' general meeting (or in large plants, at delegate conferences)—and for breach of agreement the management, *not* the Works Committee, is legally liable to disciplinary action or even prosecution.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There is the knowledge that, out of the nearly 4 million members of Works Committees, more than half are women (with equal pay for equal work), and about 400,000 are youth. No worker may be sacked without the sanction of the Works Committee: and no member of the Works Committee, shop or departmental committees under it and no shop steward ("trade union group organiser") may be sacked, or even transferred to other work, without the sanction of a higher-standing union body. Moreover only the Works Committee can sanction any request by the management for the limited overtime allowed under Soviet law (on an earlier visit to these works, some years ago, I read the minutes of the Works Committee over a considerable period, and noted how it sanctioned some overtime and refused requests in other cases). On a report from any of the 4,500 full-time technically trained Inspectors of Labour—employed by the unions, and supported in their job by about 3 million voluntary "social inspectors" elected by their fellow workers—the Works Committee can stop a section, an entire shop or even the establishment itself for breach of safety or health regulations.

Then there is the ultimate sanction which Filipov mentioned, and which was illustrated by a note in *Trud*, the trade union daily, on 13 August, 1972: that the manager of a Volgograd repair and assembly board (his name was given) had obviously not been coping with his responsibilities. The Volgograd Regional Committee of the Engineering Workers' Union had expressed its lack of confidence in him: whereupon the Ministry of Tractor and Agricultural Engineering had relieved him of his post. Such cases are rare, naturally, and the publicity given them helps to keep them that way, as well as to strengthen the confidence of the workers that they are really "the true masters of society". Moreover, they find this natural, since in fact the trade unions at the appropriate level are, and for many years have been, consulted before managerial appointments are made. This is an obvious corollary from the fact that in the whole planning system of the USSR, and not only on wages, the trade unions play an intimate part.

With rights and practices like these—more extensive still than there is room for here—who needs to strike in the Soviet Union? And one can understand the somewhat contemptuous laughter of the workers that evening at Mr. Bonavia's painful efforts. What he failed to learn in the USSR, for all his undoubted talents and in spite of his opportunities, is well summed up by this passage in a recent volume published by the Central Council of Trade Unions (*Soviet Trade Unions Today*, Moscow, 1972, p. 52):

> "In the Soviet Union there has grown up a new working class which is the leading political force of society. It now constitutes over 55 per cent of the occupied population, and remains the basic productive force of society. Its revolutionary spirit, discipline, organisation and collectivism become ever stronger as its general culture, education and political activity grow".

11. BRIEF CONCLUSIONS

In a remarkable article, *Our Revolution*—one of the last he ever wrote—Lenin summed up in brief compass (just after the founding of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) the aim of his life's work and his vision of the future for Soviet Russia. He was answering one of the more learned and subtle Mensheviks, Sukhanov (subtle enough to have stayed on in Soviet Russia and take a Soviet post, to become one of the organisers of a secret anti-Soviet organisation, discovered years later). Sukhanov had echoed some of the standard "arguments" of Social-Democrats in other countries, to which Lenin was replying.[2]

He wrote:

> "If a definite level of culture is required for the building of Socialism (although nobody can say just what that definite 'level of culture' is, for it differs in every West European country), why cannot we begin by first achieving the pre-requisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way, and *then*, with the aid of the workers' and peasants' government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other nations? . . .
>
> "You say that civilisation is necessary for the building of Socialism. Very good. But why could we not first create such pre-requisites of civilisation in our country as the expulsion of the landowners and the Russian capitalists, and then start moving towards Socialism? Where, in what books, have you read that such variations of the customary historical order of events are impermissible or impossible?"

The whole history of the Soviet Union since Lenin wrote these words in January, 1923, proves that he was right in putting these devastating questions, not excluding his passing remark about the varied level of culture in the West European countries.

As for Mr. Bonavia, *The Times* wrote, in an indignant comment on his expulsion from the USSR, that he had joined the newspaper in Saigon, two years before proceeding to Moscow in 1969. It is at least fair to Mr. Bonavia to say that the regime created by President Thieu and his American military-financial bosses was, for a British journalist, no sort of preparation for the most elementary understanding of life in the Soviet Union and the affairs of its peoples. But even a hostile critic should study primary facts about what he is criticising.

[2] Characteristically, enterprising publishers in Britain and the USA have thought fit to reprint Sukhanov's book.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reply to John Lewis (Self Criticism)

Louis Althusser

In the first part of his article, Louis Althusser dealt with the content of John Lewis' philosophical Theses.[1] *He now deals with the effects of such Theses in the sciences and in politics.*

Part II

PHILOSOPHY AND REVISIONISM

I

Let us prove the point about the scientific and political effects of philosophical Theses by comparing John Lewis' Theses with the Theses of Marxism-Leninism. That way we shall be able to see how philosophy "functions".

John Lewis' Thesis: It is man who makes history.

Theses of Marxism-Leninism: It is the masses which make history. The class struggle is the motor of history.

Let us look at the *effects* of these Theses.

Effects in the Field of Science

When someone now, in 1972, defends the Thesis that it is man who makes history, what effect does that have as far as the *science* of history is concerned? Can one make use of it to produce some scientific knowledge?

In fact, it is of no use at all from this point of view. John Lewis does not show how one could get anything out of it which might be of use in teaching us about the way the class struggle works. You might say that he lacked the space to do so in a single article. So let us turn to his "Master", Jean-Paul Sartre, to the philosopher of "human liberty", of man-projecting-himself-into-the-future (transcendence), of man "*en situation*", "transcending his place in the world" by his liberty. This famous philosopher has written two enormous books—*Being and Nothingness* (1939), and later a book which deals with history and Marxism, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960). More than two thousand pages. Did Jean-Paul Sartre manage to use the Thesis that "it is man who makes history" to produce some scientific historical knowledge? Did this Thesis enable him to produce scientific knowledge which would help us act in history? No. *Not a single bit of scientific knowledge* came out of it.

But someone will say: here's an example that proves the opposite of your Thesis about philospohy! For this "humanist" philosophy has no effect at all on scientific knowledge. Sorry! I claim that the Thesis defended by John Lewis and Jean-Paul Sartre really do have an effect: they *prevent* the development of *existing* scientific knowledge. They are an obstacle to knowledge. Instead of helping it to progress, they *hold it back*. More precisely, they take knowledge back to the state it was in *before* the scientific discoveries and developments made by Marx and Lenin. They take things back to the pre-scientific state.

It is not the first time that this has happened in the history of humanity. For example, half a century after Galileo—that is, half a century after physics had been founded as a *science*—there were still philosophers who defended Aristotelian "physics"! They attacked Galileo's discoveries and wanted to take knowledge of the natural world back to its pre-scientific Aristotelian state. There are no longer any Aristotelian "physicists", but the same thing is happening in other fields. For example: there are anti-Freudian "psychologists". And there are anti-Marxist philosophers of history, who carry on as if Marx had never existed, or had never founded a science. They may be personally honest. They may even, like Sartre, want to "help" Marxism and psychoanalysis! But it is not their intentions that count. What count are the real *effects* in science of their philosophy. The fact is that although he has Marx and Freud before him, Sartre is a *pre*-Marxist and *pre*-Freudian ideologist. Instead of helping to build on the scientific discoveries of Marx and Freud, he mixes things up and paralyses research.

That is how philosophy "works" in the sciences. *Either* it helps them to produce new scientific knowledge, *or* it tries to wipe out these advances and drag humanity back to a time when the science did not yet exist. Philosophy therefore works in the sciences in a progressive or retrogressive way.

You can see what is at stake. It is not enough to say that what John Lewis or Sartre says does not help us to produce any scientific knowledge of history. It is not even enough to say that what they

[1] See John Lewis, *The Althusser Case*, in *Marxism Today*, January and February 1972. (Translator's note)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

say represents an "epistemological obstacle"[2] (to use Gaston Bachelard's term).[3] We are forced to say that their Thesis produces effects which are extremely harmful to scientific knowledge, retrogressive effects, because instead of helping us, in 1972, to understand the great scientific treasure that we possess in the knowledge given us by Marx, they go back to zero. They take us back to the good old days of Hegel and Feuerbach, to the time before Marx's discovery, before his "epistemological break".[4] They mix everything up, and thus they disarm revolutionary philosophers, theoreticians and militants. They disarm them because in effect they deprive them of an irreplacable weapon: the objective knowledge of the conditions, mechanisms and forms of the class struggle.

The Function of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy

If you now look at the Marxist-Leninist Theses—"it is the masses which make history", "the class struggle is the motor of history"—the contrast is striking. These Theses are *on the side of* a *scientific* understanding of history. They do not ignore Marx's scientific discovery. On the contrary. These philosophical Theses are also proven propositions of the science of history, of historical materialism.[5]

These Theses, then, take account of the existence of the science of history. But at the same time they *help* the working out of new explanations, of new scientific discoveries. For example, they *force* us to define the masses which are "making" history: in *class* terms. Then again, they *force* us to define the form of union between the classes which make up the masses. As far as we are concerned, they put the working class in the forefront. They force us to define the proletariat as the class whose conditions of exploitation render it capable of directing the struggle of all the oppressed and exploited classes, the struggle to take the state power held by the imperialist bourgeoisie, These Theses allow us to understand that the "class struggle" is the "motor of history", they force us "never to forget the class struggle".

The theoretical consequences of these propositions are known to every Communist. They require us, for example, to break with the bourgeois conception of political economy (*Capital* is subtitled: *A Critique of Political Economy*), of the state, of ideologies, of "culture", etc., etc. These Theses help to stimulate scientific research in the field of the science of history.

On the one hand, then, we have philosophical Theses which have retrogressive effects, in relation to theoretical work, on the science of history. On the other hand we have philosophical Theses which have progressive effects, in relation to theoretical work, in the *existing* fields of the Marxist science of history, and *revolutionary* effects in the fields which this science has not yet really touched (for example, in anthropology, in the history of the sciences, in art, in philosophy, etc., etc.).

That is what is at stake, for science, in the class struggle in the field of theory.

Political effects

I think that, as far as political effects are concerned, things are rather clear.

How could one carry on the class struggle on the basis of the philosophical Thesis: "it is man who makes history"? It might be said that this Thesis serves *everyone, without distinction*, whether he be a capitalist, a petty-bourgeois or a worker, because these are all "*men*". But that is not true. It serves those whose *interest* it is to talk about "man" *and not* about the masses, about "man" *and not* about classes and the class struggle. Above all, it serves the bourgeois class. It also serves the petty-bourgeoisie. In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx wrote: "The bourgeois have very good grounds for falsely ascribing *supernatural creative power* to human labour".[6] Why? Because by making "men" think that "labour is the source of all wealth and all culture", the bourgeoisie can keep quiet about the power of *nature*, about the decisive importance of the *natural, material conditions* of human labour. And why does the bourgeoisie want to keep quiet about the natural-material conditions of labour? Because *it controls them.* The bourgeoisie knows what it is doing.

---

[2] *Epistemology:* literally, talk (*logos*) about science (*episteme*). Normally used to designate philosophical investigation of scientific practice. [Translator's note]

[3] Gaston Bachelard: French philosopher, now dead, who introduced the idea of the *epistemological obstacle*—an obstacle to the development of science. [Translator's note]

[4] *Epistemological break:* a point of no return in theoretical history. When we examine the history of a science, we find that it does not grow in a gradual way out of pre-scientific ideas, but breaks with these ideas and replaces them with a new system. Althusser holds that the ideas expressed by Marx in his early works were still of a pre-scientific character. He therefore had to break with these ideas, and replace them—though not of course all at once, for such a break involves a struggle—with scientific ideas. Thus he founded the science of history (historical materialism), in very much the same way, to take an example, as Galileo founded the science of physics. [Translator's note]

[5] Scientific propositions can therefore "function" as philosophical Theses. This is a point which deserves to be considered more closely.

[6] Marx was therefore criticising the socialist John Lewises of his time, inscribed in the Unity Programme of the German Social-Democratic Party and Lassalle's Party: "*Labour is the source of all wealth and all culture*".

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If the workers are told that "it is men who make history", that helps to *disarm* them. It tends to make them think that they are all-powerful as men, whereas in fact they are disarmed as workers in the face of the power which is really in command: that of the bourgeoisie, which controls the *material* and *political* conditions determining history. The humanist line turns them away from the class struggle, prevents them from making use of the only power they possess: that of their organisation as a class, by means of their class organisations (the trade unions, the party).

On the one hand, then, we have Theses which directly help the working class to understand its role, its conditions of existence, of exploitation and of struggle, which help them to create organisations which will lead the struggle of all exploited people to seize state power from the bourgeoisie.

No need to say more.

None of this is affected by the fact that these bourgeois or petty-bourgeois Theses are defended, in 1972, by a militant of a Communist Party. Read chapter 3 of the *Communist Manifesto*. You will see that in 1847 Marx distinguished three kinds of socialism: reactionary (feudal, petty-bourgeois, *humanist*[7]) socialism, conservative or bourgeois socialism, and critical-utopian socialism and communism. You have the choice! Read the great polemical writings of Engels and of Lenin about the influence of bourgeois ideology in the workers' parties (reformism, revisionism). You have the choice!

What we want to know now is how, after so many solemn warnings and so many testing experiences, it is possible for a Communist—John Lewis—to present his "Theses" as Marxist.

We shall see.

II

But first, I will deal with John Lewis' second reproach: *that Althusser does not understand the history of the formation of Marx's thought*. I will deal with it briefly, so as not to hold up the reader.

Does Something Really Happen in 1845?

Here I must make my "self criticism", and give way to John Lewis on one precise point.

In my first essays, I suggested that after the "epistemological break of 1845 (after the discovery by which Marx founded the science of history) the philosophical categories of *alienation* and of the *negation of the negation* disappear. John Lewis replies that this is not true. And he is right. You certainly do find these concepts (directly or indirectly) in the *German Ideology*, in the *Grundrisse* (two texts which Marx never published) and also, though much more rarely, in *Capital* (the negation of the negation, for example, appears only once).

On the other hand John Lewis would have a hard job finding these concepts in the *Communist Manifesto*, in the *Poverty of Philosophy*, in *Wage Labour and Capital*, in his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* or in the *Notes on Wagner's Textbook*. And this is to cite only *theoretical* texts. As far as the political texts are concerned—and this of course is equally true of the political texts of Lenin, Gramsci or Mao—well, he can always try!

But in any case, formally speaking John Lewis is right. And so, even if his argument in fact depends on leaving aside all the texts which could bother him, I must nevertheless reply.

Here, briefly, is my reply.

I. If you look at the whole of Marx's work, there is no doubt that there does exist a "break" in 1845. Marx *says so* himself. But no-one should be believed simply on his word, not even Marx. You have to judge on the evidence. Nevertheless, the whole of Marx's work shows him to be right on this point. In 1845 Marx began to "lay down" the foundations of a science which did not exist before he came along: the science of history. And in order to do that he set out a number of new concepts which cannot be found anywhere in his humanist works of youth: *mode of production*, *productive forces*, *relations of production*, *infrastructure-superstructure*, *ideologies*, etc. No-one in the world can deny that.

If John Lewis still doubts the reality of this "break", or rather of this *irruption* of a new science in a still "ideological" or pre-scientific universe, he should compare two judgements made by Marx on Feuerbach and Proudhon.

Feuerbach is described in the *1844 Manuscripts* as a philosopher who has made extraordinary discoveries, who has discovered both the basis and the principle of the critique of political economy. But a year later, in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, and in the *German Ideology*, he is the object of an all-out attack. After that he simply disappears.

Proudhon is described in the *Holy Family* (end of 1844) as the "scientific theoretician of the French proletariat". But in 1847, in the *Poverty of Philosophy*, he gets a hiding from which he will never recover. After that he simply disappears.

If, as John Lewis says, *nothing* really happened in 1845, and if everything that I have said about the "epistemological break" is "a complete myth", then I'll be hung for it.

II. So something *irreversible* really does start in

[7] Marx called it German or "True" Socialism. He writes that these German *literati* "wrote their philosophical nonsense beneath the French original. For instance, beneath the French criticism of the economic functions of money, they wrote 'Alienation of Humanity' . . ." [Translator's note]

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1845: the "epistemological break" is a point of *no return*. Something begins which will have no end. A "continuous break", I wrote, the beginning of a long period of work, as in every other science, And although the way ahead is open, it is difficult and sometimes even dramatic, marked by events—theoretical events—which concern the scientific knowledge of a particular object: the conditions, the workings and the forms of the class struggle. In simpler terms, the science of history.

We can say, then, that this science does not emerge, ready-made, from Marx's head. It merely *has its beginning* in 1845, and has not yet got rid of all its past—of all the ideological and philosophical prehistory out of which it emerges.

We can add: look at Marx's texts, look at the birth and development of his scientific concepts, and—since John Lewis insists on talking about them—you will at the same time see the gradual disappearance of these two philosophical categories inherited from the past and still subsisting as remnants, known as *alienation* and the *negation of the negation*. Now in fact, the more we advance in time, the more these categories disappear. *Capital* speaks only once of the negation of the negation (in 2,500 pages!). It is true that Marx several times uses the term "alienation". But all that disappears in Marx's later texts and in Lenin.[8] Completely. We can therefore say: what is important is the *tendency*. And Marx's scientific work does *tend* to get rid of these philosophical categories.

A Self Criti ism

III. But this is not enough. And here is my self criticism.

I was not attentive enough to the *fact* which John Lewis points out, that is, to the fact of the continuing presence of the said philosophical categories *after* the "epistemological break". And that was because I identified the "epistemological break" with Marx's philosophical revolution. More precisely, I never separated Marx's philosophical revolution and the "epistemological break". I talked about philosophy as if it were science, and wrote that in 1845 Marx made a *double* break, scientific *and* philosophical.

That was a mistake. It is an example of the deviation of theoreticism which I denounced in the brief self criticism contained in the Preface to the Italian edition of *Reading Capital* (1966). This Preface was reproduced in the English edition. The mistake consists in thinking that philosophy is a *science* and that, like every science, it has 1. an *object*, 2. a *beginning* (the "epistemological break" takes place at the moment when it *looms up* in the pre-scientific, ideological cultural universe), and 3. a *history* (comparable to the history of a science). This theoreticist error found its clearest and purest expression in my formula: philosophy is "Theory of theoretical practice".

Since that time I have begun to "put things right". In a philosophy course for scientists, dating from 1967, and again in *Lenin and Philosophy* (February 1968), I put forward other propositions:

1. Philosophy is not a science.
2. Philosophy has no object, in the sense in which a science has an object.
3. Philosophy has no history, in the sense in which a science has a history.
4. Philosophy is politics in the field of theory.

What are the consequences?

1. It is impossible to reduce philosophy to science, and it is impossible to reduce Marx's philosophical revolution to the "epistemological break".

2. Marx's philosophical revolution preceded Marx's "epistemological break". It *made the break possible*.

You can of course argue quite seriously that there is a sense in which philosophy, as Hegel said, and as I repeated in *Lenin and Philosophy*, always "lags behind" science or the sciences. But from another point of view, which is essential here, you have to say the opposite, and argue that in the history of Marx's thought the philosophical revolution necessarily "preceded" the scientific breakthrough.

In the case of other sciences, we lack evidence and proof. But in the case of Marx, what happens is that although the philosophical revolution and the epistemological break take place at the same point in time, it is the philosophical revolution which "determines" the scientific "break".

Concretely, that means the following. The young Marx, born of a good bourgeois family in the Rhineland, entered public life as editor of a liberal newspaper of the same land. That was in 1841. A young and brilliant intellectual, he was, within three or four years, to undergo an astonishing evolution *in politics*. He was to pass from radical bourgeois liberalism (1841-42) to petty bourgeois communism (1843-44), then to proletarian communism (1844-45). These are incontestable facts. But parallel to this political evolution you can observe an evolution in philosophy. *In philosophy*, over the same period, the young Marx was to pass from a position of subjective neo-Hegelianism (of a Kant-Fichte type) to theoretical humanism (Feuerbach), before rejecting this to pass over to a philosophy which would no longer merely "interpret" the world, but "change it".

[8] One really must be short of arguments to have to use, as a proof of Lenin's "humanist philosophy", a few lines from *The German Ideology* (1844) which Lenin copied into his notebooks! John Lewis is obviously not worried about gaining the reputation of "schoolman" himself.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If you now compare Marx's political evolution with his philosophical evolution, you will see:

1. that his philosophical evolution is based on his political evolution; and

2. that his scientific discovery (the "break") is based on his political evolution.

That means, in practice, that it is because the young Marx went over to a revolutionary proletarian class position in his theoretical work that he was able to lay down the foundations of the scientific theory of history as history of the class struggle.

IV. On the basis of these points it should be possible to account for the intermittent survival of categories like those of *alienation* and of the *negation of the negation*. Note that I talk about intermittent survival. For alongside their *tendency* to disappear in Marx's work, considered as a whole, there is a strange phenomenon which must be accounted for: their total disappearance in certain works, then their *subsequent* reappearance. For example, the two categories in question are totally absent from the *Communist Manifesto* as well as from the *Poverty of Philosophy* (published by Marx in 1847). They are absent from his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (which he published in 1859). But there are many references to alienation in the *Grundrisse* (preparatory notes made by Marx in the years 1857-58, and which he did not publish). We know, because of a letter sent to Engels that Marx had, "by chance", re-read Hegel's *Logic* in 1858 and had been fascinated by it. In *Capital* (1867) alienation comes up again, but much more rarely, and the negation of the negation appears just once. And so on.

However that might be, and in spite of all the work which still remains to be done, one fact is clear. The Marxist science of history did not progress in a simple straight line, under its own power, from the moment of the "epistemological break" onwards. If it is true that Marx had to go over to proletarian class positions in his theoretical work in order to be able to found the science of history, he did not make that transition all at once, *once and for all*, with no going back. The philosophical battle continued within Marx himself, in his work, around the principles of the new science. The science only gained its ground little by little, in theoretical struggle, in theoretical class struggle, and in close relation to the class struggle going on in the world outside theory, This struggle lasted all of Marx's life. It has continued after him, in the labour movement. And it continues in our own time.

It is therefore possible to understand the partial disappearance and reappearance of certain categories in Marx's work as indicative of attempts, advances and failures in the long dual struggle to take up class positions in theoretical work and to found the science of history.

Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Philosophy

When I said that it was the "epistemological break" which was primary, and when I failed to distinguish it from the "philosophical break", I therefore made two mistakes. In the case of Marx it is the philosophical revolution which is *primary*. And if we are allowed to keep the term "break" to designate the beginning of the *science* of history, the point of no return, we cannot use the same term for philosophy, *because in philosophy, as for long periods in the class struggle, there is no point of no return*. We must therefore talk about "revolution in philosophy". This expression is more correct, because we all know that a revolution is always exposed to attacks, to reverses and to counter-revolution.

Nothing then is ever *definitively* settled in philosophy: there are always "come-backs", and the oldest philosophies are always ready to mount an offensive disguised in modern trappings. Why?

Because philosophy is, in the last instance, class struggle in the field of theory. Because the revolutionary classes are always opposed by the old conservative and reactionary ruling classes, who will never give up their ambition for revenge, even when they no longer hold state power. According to the state of affairs, they will defend their power or mount an assault against the new power, under the guise of such and such a philosophy: the one that serves them best, even if its is the oldest in the world. It just has to be done up a bit and given a modern coat of paint. Philosophical Theses *have no age*. That is the sense in which I took up Marx's comment in the *German Ideology* that "philosophy has no history".

In practice bourgeois ideology, when it is able to put on enough pressure, can penetrate Marxism itself. The class struggle in the field of theory is not just a phrase: it is a reality, a terrible reality. Without understanding that, it is impossible to understand either the dramatic history of the formation of Marx's thought or the "grave difficulties" which even today, in 1972, weigh on the "orthodoxy" defended by a certain number of Communists.

The dramatic history of Marx and of his thought can be reduced, if we follow John Lewis, to a peaceful and problem-free university career! A certain Marx appears on the literary and philosophical scene. Quite naturally, he begins to talk about politics in the *Communist Manifesto*, then about economics in *Capital*. He founds and directs the First International, opposes the insurrection in Paris, then in the space of two months, takes a firm stand on the side of the Paris Commune. He wages a battle to the death against the anarchists and followers of Proudhon, etc., etc. All that without the hint of a problem, of a drama, apart from all the assaults of the struggle, with no regard to the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

difficulties, the questions, all the torments of the search for "truth" in that struggle itself. Like a good bourgeois intellectual, as well installed in his thought as he is in the comfort of his existence, Marx (in this view) *always thought the same thing*, without a revolution or "break" in his thinking. Here I will merely say that only someone who has no experience or is blind to all experience of the class struggle in the field of theory—or even simply of the way scientific research is done—could argue such nonsense, and thus insult the life and sufferings not only of Marx himself but of all Communists (and also of those scientists who succeed in *finding something out*). Now, not only did Marx "find something out" (and at what risk, and of what importance!), but he was also a *leader* of the labour movement for thirty-five years. He always "did his thinking" in the struggle, that is the *only way* in which he did it.

The whole history of the labour movement is marked by endless crises, dramas and struggles. There is no need for me to go over them here. But as far as philosophy is concerned, we ought at least to mention the great struggles of Engels and Lenin against the intervention of bourgeois philosophy in Marxism and in the workers' parties: the struggle against the intervention of the idealism of Dühring and of Bernstein, both of them declared neo-Kantians and humanists, whose theoretical revisionism covered their political reformism and political revisionism.

John Lewis would do well to re-read the first pages of *What is to be Done*? In this text a petty-bourgeois intellectual named Lenin is defending Marx's "orthodoxy", itself "in grave difficulties", with "extreme dogmatism". Yes, Lenin declared himself proud to be attacked as a "dogmatist" by the international coalition of "critical" revisionists, with the "English Fabians" and "French Ministerialists" at their head! Yes, Lenin declared himself proud to defend this old problem-ridden "orthodoxy", the orthodoxy of Marx's teaching. Yes, he thought it was "in grave difficulties". The cause: reformism and revisionism!

Some Communists, today, are thinking and doing the same. There certainly are not too many of them, and they are rather alone. That is how things are. Why? We shall see.

III

Let us see why.

We have to answer two questions.

1. Why are there Communists like John Lewis (and there are quite a lot of them) who, in 1972, can openly argue in Communist journals for a philosophy which they call Marxist, but which is in fact simply a variant of bourgeois idealism?

2. Why are the Communist philosophers who defend Marx's philosophy so few in number, and why are they so isolated in their own parties?

To answer these two questions, which are really one and the same, we must—all apologies to John Lewis—briefly enter the field of political history.

I have made the basic points in *For Marx*. But John Lewis does not seem to have read the political pages of *For Marx*. John Lewis is a pure spirit.

Stalin and the Twentieth Congress

I said in *For Marx* that my period of philosophical silence ended with the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Party in 1956.

That is true. Before the Twentieth Congress it was not possible for a Communist philosopher, at least in France, to publish *serious philosophical texts*—that is to say, texts which would be both deep and capable of being put to use ideologically and politically. That is the good side of the Twentieth Congress. From that time on it was possible to publish such texts. The French Party, to take only one case, explicitly recognised (at the Argenteuil Central Committee meeting in 1966) the right of party members to carry out and publish their philosophical research.

But the "criticism of Stalin's errors" was formulated at the Twentieth Congress in terms such that there inevitably followed what we must call an unleashing of *bourgeois* ideological and philosophical themes within the Communist Parties themselves. This was the case above all among Communist intellectuals, but it also touched certain leaders and even certain leaderships.

Why?

Because the "criticism of Stalin's errors" (some of which—and rather a lot!—turned out to be crimes) was made in a non-Marxist way.

The Twentieth Congress criticised and denounced the "cult of personality" (the cult in general, personality in general. . . .) and summed up Stalin's "errors" in the concept of "violation of Socialist *legality*". The Twentieth Congress therefore limited itself to denouncing certain *facts* about what went on in the *legal superstructure*, without relating them—as every Marxist analysis must do—firstly, to the rest of the Soviet superstructure (above all the state and party), and secondly, to the infrastructure, namely the relations of production, class relations and the class struggle in the USSR.

Instead of relating the "violations of socialist legality" to 1. the state, *plus* the party, and 2. the class struggle, the Twentieth Congress instead related them to . . . the "cult of personality". That is, it related them to a concept which, as I pointed out in *For Marx*, cannot be "found" in Marxist theory. I now venture to say that it can perfectly well be "found" elsewhere: in *bourgeois* philosophy and psycho-sociological ideology.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If you take Communist philosophers and other Communist "intellectuals" and set them officially on a bourgeois ideological and philosophical line, in order to "criticise" a regime under which they (and others) have suffered deeply, you must not be surprised when the same Communist philosophers and intellectuals go straight forward on the road of bourgeois philosophy. It has been opened up right in front of them! You must not be surprised when they make up their own little bourgeois Marxist philosophy of the Rights of Man, exalting Man and his Rights, the first of which is *liberty*, whose reverse side is *alienation*. It is quite natural that they will lean on Marx's early works—that is what those works are there for—and then on humanism in all its forms! Shall it be Garaudy's socialist humanism, John Lewis' humanism, the "true" or "real" humanism of others, or even (why not?) "scientific" humanism itself? Between these different varieties of the philosophy of human *liberty*, each philosopher can of course *freely* take his choice! All that is perfectly normal.

Two Things Which are not the Same

Having said that, we must add that it is important not to mix things up which, politically speaking, ought not to be confused, things which are quite different from one another. The humanist reactions of western Communist theoreticians, and even of some from eastern Europe, are one thing. It would however be an extremely serious political mistake, for example, to claim to judge and condemn—on account of an adjective ("human")—something like "*socialism with a human face*", a slogan under which the Czech masses let everyone know (even if the form was sometimes confused) about their class and national grievances and aspirations. It would be an extremely serious political mistake to confuse this national mass movement, this important historical fact, with the humanist pedantry of our western, sometimes Communist philosophers (or of such and such a philosopher of eastern Europe). There were intellectuals in the Czech national mass movement, but it was not a "movement of intellectuals". What the Czech people wanted was *socialism*, and not humanism. They wanted a socialism whose *face* (not the *body*: the body does not occur in the formula) would not be disfigured by practices unworthy both of themselves (the Czech people: a people of a high political culture) and of socialism. A socialism with a human face. The adjective is in the right place. The national mass movement of the Czech people, even if it is no longer to be heard of (and the struggle is nevertheless still going on) merits the respect and support of all Communists. Exactly as the "humanist" philosophies of western intellectuals (at ease in their academic chairs or elsewhere), the philosophies of "Marxist humanism", whether they are called "true" or "scientific", merit the criticism of all Communists.

It is for all the reasons outlined above, then, that there are cases like John Lewis in the western Communist Parties—and that there are rather a lot of them.

And it is for the same reasons—directly political reasons—that I want to repeat my thanks to *Marxism Today*, journal of the Communist Party of Great Britain, for accepting to publish my reply.

Discussion Contribution on:

Strategy of Socialist Revolution in Britain

Tony Chater

I would like to comment on a question which has been touched upon in some of the contributions to the discussion. This concerns the role of Parliament in the transition to socialism. There appears to be a misconception amongst some contributors about the essence of the *British Road to Socialism*, which they seem to regard almost as Parliamentarianism.

Parliament, of course, plays an important part in the strategy of the *British Road*, but it would be wrong to describe it as a Parliamentary road of transition to socialism. Rather is it a complex interaction of Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary mass struggle, the one influencing the other, but with the decisive pace-setting factor being mass

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

activity, in the factories and localities, and through the trade unions, co-operatives and other democratic organisations.

Inside and Outside Parliament

As John Gollan put it at the Communist Party Congress:

> "Direct action of various kinds is the most important means of democratic struggle at the moment. The possibilities are numerous. . . . The right to work: on this the Government is most vulnerable. The UCS and other struggles have valuable lessons for new forms of direct action, which should have been backed by solidarity. We should work to get the trade unions to make the Carr Act inoperable. . . . A wages offensive is important direct action. . . . Similar action on the social services is possible, for example, industrial action on pensions; the defiance of the Government by local Councils on school milk could be followed by refusal to operate high rents. . . . It is this type of approach—operative democracy involving masses of people in industrial and political activity—which will create conditions for a governmental crisis and a General Election".

Operative Democracy

This concept of operative democracy describes a process of social participation which is deeply revolutionary in content, and as John Gollan indicates, it can act upon Parliament and the Government even before Communist MPs are elected and whilst the left in Parliament is relatively weak. The crisis within the Parliamentary Labour Party over the past year is an example of this process, because what was really involved was a dispute between the right-wing Labour leaders on how to handle the Common Market given the overwhelming opposition to entry in the Labour and trade union movement.

The slogan of a Labour Government committed to left policies only acquires meaning within this concept of operative democracy. It is a step in the direction of socialism, which is a practical possibility, as can be seen from the character of the policy resolutions passed at TUC and Labour Party Conferences over recent years. At this stage, of course, it is a question of forcing the implementation of the admittedly limited but significant measures outlined in the resolutions by a reluctant leadership, which, in the course of the struggle will try every possible manoeuvre and diversion, but will find its position becoming increasingly untenable, creating thereby ever greater possibilities for solving the question of leadership in favour of the left.

Mass Struggle the Key

The key is mass struggle: mass struggle on an ever-expanding scale, constantly developing a conscious social perspective as a result of the ideological offensive and left leadership with which it has to be increasingly combined. This requires growing unity between all involved in the struggle, the Labour Party left, the Communist Party, and non-Party militants in the trade unions and other mass organisations. The ending of bans and proscriptions is an aspect of that struggle. And particularly important as the next stage, is the lifting of the ban which requires those paying the political levy to be individual members of the Labour Party before they can attend Labour Party gatherings on behalf of their unions. This ban affects not only the Communists, but all non-Labour Party militants—and its removal, a basic democratic demand, would strengthen the position of the left enormously.

Clearly the mass struggle can have a bigger impact to the extent that the left, including the Communists, are represented on the Councils and in Parliament, and in the top leadership of the trade unions and the TUC. To achieve this requires a higher level of political understanding than exists today, and this can only come out of the experience of the sort of operative democracy described above. It is from that point of view that we can see the logic of operative democracy unfolding itself in the ultimate election of a majority of Communist and Labour MPs agreed on a socialist programme.

Two Dangers

As I see it, there are two dangers facing the left in its attitude to Parliament. There are those who place a premium on getting into Parliament and the Councils, because, when elected, they feel they are in the centre of power and able to exercise an influence on it. This pre-occupation tends to restrict their vision to the extent that they do not appreciate sufficiently, if at all, the need to integrate their Parliamentary or Council activity with the mass movement outside. And in any case, not belonging to a Party like the Communist Party, whose organisation has deep roots in the working class movement throughout the country, they are inevitably to that extent, one step removed or isolated from the mass struggle. This seems to me to be the weakness of many on the left within the Labour Party.

Then there is the ultra-left approach, which, seeing what appears to be a growing impotence of present day Parliaments and Councils, rejects these institutions out of hand, sets out to expose their inadequacies to public view, and then takes refuge in the mass struggle outside as the only means of winning socialism.

Both attitudes contain elements of truth, but both are *one-sided*, and for that reason, both are wrong as a strategy for socialist advance.

Parliament is part of the structure of the state, in present circumstances a capitalist state which *in toto*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is a highly complex apparatus used to maintain the domination over society of the monopoly capitalists: the big banks, financial institutions, and the industrial giants.

Distinguishing Features

But unlike other branches of the state, Parliament has a very distinguishing feature. As a result of the struggle for democratic rights waged by the working class for more than a century, against the fierce resistance of the capitalists, Parliament is elected by universal suffrage, and though there is no written Constitution, it has power to take decisions, to pass laws.

The winning of universal suffrage was a great victory for the working class. But by itself it is insufficient. Its edge can be completely blunted. In fact, this is what the capitalists have set out to do, and in the main they have been successful. Making use of their vast economic power and their control of education and the mass media, they have encouraged reformist illusions and ideas of class collaboration, thereby assisting the present right-wing leadership to gain control of the machinery of the Labour movement. They have set out to make the Labour Party safe for capitalism, to act as an alternative government which will work within the confines of capitalism, and which will sow disillusionment and apathy in the working class because of its consequent failures.

But this is not an inevitable, fixed state of affairs, true for all time. It is the overt, contemporary expression of a certain stage in the ceaseless ongoing battle between workers and capitalists. There are objective reasons rooted in the imperialist past of Britain which have enabled the capitalist class to master universal suffrage for the time being. But in the world of today, with the ever-deepening general crisis of capitalism, and in that context, the acute crisis of British imperialism, seen in its relative decline compared with the USA, West Germany and Japan, this objective basis is *beginning* to crumble. This fact finds its reflection in the Industrial Relations Act, the Housing Finance Bill, the gradual erosion of the powers of Parliament through the strengthening of the Cabinet and inner-Cabinet system linked closely with the Permanent Officials, and the general growth of authoritarianism and bureaucracy with as its outstanding example the Treaty of Rome's structure for the Common Market. These all represent, at least in part, an alternative approach to the problem posed for the capitalists by universal suffrage in a new situation where the attempt to cope with the problems of imperialist crisis is producing a growing confrontation with qualitatively distinct features arising from the depth of the crisis itself.

The essence of this confrontation was outlined by John Gollan at the Congress in this way:

> "The Tories and the capitalists cannot achieve their present aims without making inroads into the organised power of the working class. Conversely, the working class cannot defend and advance its position without making inroads into the power of capitalism".

This type of situation is bound to place its imprint on the class consciousness which develops out of the confrontation, posing for it not merely the question of economics, but of politics. And it finds a reflection in the yearning for basic social change, particularly amongst young people, a yearning which only socialism can satisfy.

Mass Action with a Purpose

All this is still at a very early stage and far from consolidated, but given that the objective basis for the way the capitalists handled universal suffrage is *beginning* to crumble, what can be done to speed it up and to ensure its subjective realisation in the thinking and therefore political outlook and activity of the working class?

The answer is surely mass action involving millions and millions on every conceivable issue. But it has to be mass action with a purpose, developing into a broad united stream of popular struggle aimed, with growing consciousness and understanding by all involved, at the bastions of capitalist power. Without underestimating the contribution which all on the left can make, it is nevertheless true that by virtue of its national organisation and Marxist perspective, no other body is better placed than the Communist Party to give the mass struggle the consistent guidance and increasing ideological clarity that it needs.

The same considerations apply to the Labour Party as to the question of Parliament and universal suffrage. In fact, the three issues are intimately intertwined. The position in the Labour Party is the result of a certain stage of a historical struggle between left and right, which in its turn is a function obviously very complex, of the class struggle between workers and capitalists. The same principles hold. It is mass struggle, with the Communist Party playing an increasing role and imbuing it with class and socialist understanding, which is the determining factor favouring the victory of the left.

Smashing the State

One last point. There seems to be a view amongst those who reject the *British Road's* concept of the role of Parliament in the transition to socialism, that it in some way conflicts with Lenin's ideas on the smashing of the state, ideas which appear to be taken in the literal sense of the word "smash". But it is important to note that Lenin distinguished

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between the different parts of the State apparatus, and just as important not to get carried away by the undertones associated with the word "smash".

Thus in *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* Lenin said:

> "In addition to the chiefly 'oppressive' apparatus —the standing army, the police and the bureaucracy —the modern state possesses an apparatus which has extremely close connections with the banks and syndicates, an apparatus which performs an enormous amount of accounting and registration work. . . . This apparatus must not, and should not, be smashed. It must be wrested from the control of the capitalists: the capitalists and the wires they pull must be *cut off, lopped off, chopped away from* the apparatus; it must be *subordinated* to the proletarian Soviets. . . .
>
> "The big banks are the 'state apparatus' which we need for bringing about socialism, and which we take ready-made from capitalism: our task here is merely to *lop off* what *capitalistically mutilates* this excellent apparatus, to make it even bigger, even more democratic, even more comprehensive. . . . A single State Bank, the biggest of the big, with branches in every rural district, in every factory, will constitute as much as nine-tenths of the *socialist* apparatus. This will be something in the nature of the *skeleton* of socialist society".
>
> (Lenin's emphasis)

With the development of state monopoly capitalism the state apparatus has become more complex and more extensive. There are the more directly oppressive parts—the army, the police, MI5, the Judiciary, then there are the Ministries ranging from the Foreign and Diplomatic Services to the Ministries of Housing, Health and Employment, plus a host of Committees reaching down in the regions and localities, which are largely administrative or managerial in content.

With a Socialist Majority

Parliament with a socialist majority would become the means of investing governmental power in the hands of the working class who would then have to use it for an assault on the state machine aimed at transforming it into an instrument of working class power.

Some arms of the state would need changing from top to bottom, e.g. the secret service, the armed forces and police. This means changes in staffing and training.

With other parts of the State apparatus e.g. some of the Ministries, like Housing and Education, the changes need not be so sweeping. There would need to be changes in leading personnel and the establishment of links with the popular mass organisations, e.g. in the case of the Housing Ministry, with tenants organisations. There would have to be far-reaching changes in the mass media. The essence would be democratisation and the rooting out of bureaucracy.

This would be in the operation in the conditions of Britain of what Lenin outlined in the quotation cited above. Of course this would be far from a smooth and cosy process. It would involve acute struggle in the course of which the capitalists would use their positions in the state machine in an attempt to thwart the will of Parliament in addition to all the other means of struggle, legal or otherwise open to them. And there would be moments of the most acute danger and crisis. But to bring about the changes necessary in the State apparatus, the *British Road* nowhere suggests that it would be sufficient to rely on governmental power alone. Governmental power backed up by mass vigilance, struggle throughout the country, struggle outside Parliament stamped with the seal of Parliamentary approval, and therefore that much stronger in the bargain, and in fact this mass struggle outside would be the decisive factor in overcoming the resistance of the old ruling class. At every stage on the *British Road to Socialism* it is the question of the intimate inter-play between the struggle inside and outside the institutions of power. That's the principle which has to be grasped.

Please post MARXISM TODAY to me every month.

I enclose :

£2.85 for one year

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post with remittance to :

CENTRAL BOOKS LTD.

37 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8PS

Published by the Communist Party, 16 King Street, London, WC2E 8HY, and printed by Farleigh Press Ltd. (T.U.), Watford, Herts.—24754

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Journals in the English Language from the U.S.S.R.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Discusses theoretical problems of world and Soviet history, philosophy, economics, international working class movement, law, sociology and literature.

Quarterly **50p** 1 year subscription **£2.10**
2 years subscription **£3.50**

CULTURE AND LIFE

This illustrated monthly deals with the participation of Soviet people in public life and national economy. The magazine also features Soviet scientific and cultural news.

On subscription only 1 year **£1.00**
2 years **£1.75**

SOVIET LITERATURE

New Soviet writing and criticism

Monthly **8p** 1 year subscription **75p**
2 years subscription **£1.20**

SPUTNIK

Monthly digest of Soviet press and literature. Includes memoirs, detective stories, political essays, fiction, art reproductions, fashions, cookery, humour etc.

Monthly **18p** 1 year subscription **£2.10**
2 years subscription **£3.50**

SOVIET FILM

Illustrated monthly. Articles about Soviet and foreign films, actors, producers and other cinema workers.

Monthly **8p** 1 year subscription **75p**
2 years subscription **£1.20**

Catalogues of Soviet journals in Russian and other languages available on request. Subscriptions may be placed through

CENTRAL BOOKS LIMITED
37 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1X 8PS

WORLD MARXIST REVIEW: 1972
No. 9

THE PARTY, THE STATE AND THE PEOPLE
by G. Husak

THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AND THE WORLD REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT
by H. Mies

THE PARTY AND YOUTH IN SOCIALIST SOCIETY
by A. Pullai

Price 13p plus postage
£1.50 for one year
from

CENTRAL BOOKS LIMITED
37 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8PS

MARX MEMORIAL LIBRARY PROGRAMME

LECTURES

(Fridays: 7.30 p.m.)

Nov. 3rd.
DIMITROV—Champion of United Front
John Williamson

Nov. 17th.
NEW THEORIES OF REVOLUTION—Fanon, Debray, Marcuse *Jack Woddis*

CLASSES

Starting Thurs. 23rd. November and four successive Thursdays:

FACTORY TALKS ON ECONOMICS:
Tutor: *Phil Goodwin* (6.30 p.m.)

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF MARXISM:
Tutor: *Bill Brooks* (8.15 p.m.)

Registration for each class 15p.

DISCUSSION CONFERENCE

Sunday, 19th November, 2.00—5.00 p.m.

"THE SOCIOLOGY OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS":
Opened by Dr. Vic Allen (Leeds University).

Registration fee 15p.

Write for folder or register at Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, E.C.1.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New Publications

D. N. Pritt

THE SUBSTANCE of the LAW

The concluding volume of D. N. Pritt's series on *Law, Class and Society.* It deals with civil law and contract, property, company law, criminal law, civil liberties and human rights. The three other volumes in the series are available and the whole set constitutes a valuable summing up of English Law from the standpoint of militant socialism.

£2

John Lewis

THE MARXISM of MARX

"a polemical book . . . . All who possibly can, should get and study this book so as to be able to participate in discussion of the important problems of Marxist theory and practice with which it deals" —*Morning Star.*

paperback £2

LAWRENCE & WISHART
46 Bedford Row, London WCIR 4LR

LONDON BOOKSHOP
64-66 Charing Cross Road,
London WC2H 0BD

Collet's

THE HUGH MACDIARMID ANTHOLOGY
edited by Michael Grieve & Alexander Scott.
Poems in Scots and English **£3.25** plus 16p p & p

FROM ROUSSEAU TO LENIN
by Lucio Colletti
Studies in Ideology and Society
£3.75 plus 16p p & p

AGAINST TROTSKYISM
The struggle of Lenin and the CPSU against Trotskyism. A collection of documents. Published by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Central Committee of the CPSU.
£1.25 plus 16p p & p

THE RIGHT TO SAY NO
by Judith Todd
Famous Rhodesian political detainee tells her own uncensored story.
£2.75 plus 16p p & p

IMPERIALISM AND THE ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL
by Rosa Luxemburg & Nikolai Bukharin
Contains "The Accumulation of Capital: An Anti-Critique" by Rosa Luxemburg; and "Imperialism and the Accumulation of Capital" by Nikolai Bukharin. **£4.00** plus 21p p & p

POLITICAL WRITINGS 1919-1929
by Georg Lukacs
The question of Parliamentarianism and other essays. **£3.75** plus 13½p p & p

STUDIES IN CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY
by Herbert Marcuse
Philosophers studied include Luther, Marx, Kant, Sartre, Hegel and Popper.
£3.25 plus 13½p p & p

And three new books on Georgi Dimitrov . . .

MEMORIES OF GEORGI DIMITROV
£2.25 plus 21p p & p

GEORGI DIMITROV 1882-1949
£1.40 plus 13½p p & p

GEORGI DIMITROV, AN OUTSTANDING MILITANT OF THE COMINTERN
£2.00 plus 13½p p & p

For our second-hand department: WANTED . . . The Marxist Classics, books on Left politics, Working Class history. Black studies, Women's Question.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED